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\*450th Anniversary of John Calvin's Birth

\*400th Anniversary of the Definitive Edition  
of Calvin's *Institutes*



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## CALVINISM AND CHURCH GOVERNMENT

EUGENE HEIDEMAN

Classification is necessary in modern life, in spite of the many misunderstandings which may result from it. The word "Calvinism" would appear to be such a necessary classification, in spite of the fact that it can so easily be used to indicate a concern for something less than the whole church. We must somehow indicate the area of the church with which we are dealing in this article, and "Calvinism" probably does as well as any other word.

Nevertheless, in using the word, we must clearly recognize that we have already departed from the teaching, spirit, and intention of Calvin himself. Calvin, who requested that no tombstone be placed upon his grave, did not desire that one or another denomination should be a tombstone raised in his honor. We may be thankful that his wishes have in general been recognized, and that churches living in the traditions of his teachings have not called themselves by his name. The words "reformed" and "presbyterian" are much truer to the spirit of Calvin than is the word "Calvinism." Thus, if one would wish to translate the title of this article into words closer to the spirit of Calvin, it would perhaps be better to speak of "The Church, reformed and presbyterian in government."

Any discussion of Calvin's concept of church government must include at least three factors: (a) the church as that institution of God which lives between the ascension and the second coming; (b) the ministry of the church as being called by God; and (c) the work of the Holy Spirit, who causes all things to be done decently and in order. In more technical terminology, one could call these the eschatological, predestinarian, and ecclesiastical aspects of the church. Because this article is to deal with "Calvinism," it is not our intention to limit the discussion to Calvin, but rather to investigate briefly the significance of Calvin's concepts for the church which has attempted to work out these principles in the governing of the church.

### A.

The church lives between the ascension and the second coming of Jesus Christ. In other words, because it cannot be severed from Christ its head, it already is perfected, saved, and even glorified. As the body of Christ on earth, however, it lies in the midst of sin, knows the temptations

of Satan, falls into wickedness, and lives in a state of humiliation and weakness. It is this state of tension which belongs to the essence of the church in these last days that has helped Calvin's distinction between the visible and invisible church to gain such popularity. For Calvin, those who were members of the invisible church were the elect saints who were connected with each other in Christ. As such, they could neither be severed from him nor could their communion be finally broken. The visible church was the church of the office bearers, preaching, sacraments, and discipline. Calvin fills many pages describing how this church may fall and has fallen, has been led by false shepherds, and denied its Lord. Yet the visible church remained for Calvin the body of Christ. Whereas Calvin did speak in terms of the false church which was led by the anti-Christ, he never equated the visible church with the false church. The visible church is just as fully church as is the invisible. There was but one church for Calvin, and it was both visible and invisible. It is interesting to note that it is precisely the visible church which is called the mother of the faithful.

It is to the credit of the whole Reformed tradition that it has remained so faithful to this eschatological tension in which the church exists upon earth. In days when the church was in decay less careful readers of Scripture tried constantly to undermine the unity of the visible and invisible church. The usual method was to view the visible church as merely an external, human institution in the world, and somehow to remove the invisible church one step from the earth. Thus one finds in the Reformed tradition such distinctions as the internal and external call, the internal and external covenant, the baptism by water and the baptism of the Spirit, and many others. Properly used, such distinctions have their place, but their net result has often been to reduce the eschatological tension by removing the true church from the world.

It may be said that the interest of Calvin and his followers in church order was in a large measure due to this insistence that the church of the ascended Lord exists on earth in the state of humiliation. It was still in the flesh, in all respects like unto the world, yet redeemed and glorified in Christ. Thus the church, in all of its thinking, life and activity, must live with its windows open to heaven from whence comes its help. From this point of view, the church lives out of the future rather than the past. It is living in the hope of his coming. It is not so much that the church goes to meet its Lord as that the Lord comes to the church. Thus no church order can be regarded as final. All church government lives under the approaching judgment of the Lord.

The church in the state of humiliation also partakes of this earthly life, however, and as such must take on form as do other institutions. There is a developing life in the church. Rules are necessary. Constitutions



must be written. Boards and synods meet, discuss, and act. We should not complain about this, for such forms are essential to the being of the church in this age. It is necessary for church constitutions and governments to witness to this eschatological situation.

The eschatological tension in which the church lives accounts for one of the most surprising and paradoxical elements in its history, namely that the church which has for 1900 years maintained that all believers are one is itself the perpetrator of much of the disunity in the world. One may not simply say that the problems of nation, class and race in the church are due to its lack of faithfulness. On the contrary, many such problems arise just because it has been faithful. Because the church in its humiliation has properly insisted upon being a good citizen of the land in which it was placed, it has often been surprised to find itself the champion of nationalism. Because it insisted upon preaching to slaves, it established segregated churches to help a black race escape the dominance of the masters, but now in another age is in a position where it is used by champions of continued segregation. Just because the presbyterian churches have so faithfully lived in the eschatological tension, they more than any other denominations have been faced with problems of national boundaries, different languages and races.

Calvin's discussion of the visible church, which has as its marks the preaching of the Gospel, the proper administration of the sacraments, and the maintenance of discipline, is of further significance with regard to the relation of the local to the national and international church. In our day it is sometimes felt that the church is basically the international or national organization, and that all local churches partake in the universal church. For Calvin and the Reformed creeds, this is not the case. On the contrary, the whole church is present in the local congregation. When the Word is preached, the sacraments are administered and discipline is maintained, the church is complete. Nothing more can be added. The Reformed Church in America is neither more nor less than is the Reformed Church of Gray Hawk, Kentucky.<sup>1</sup> What more can be done than the preaching of

<sup>1</sup>The Reformed Church in America is presently engaged in a program of revision of the constitution. Since this revision offers some interesting contrasts to the contents of this article, a number of footnotes are being attached to point up these contrasts. It would have been possible to place this material in the body of the article; but since some of the readers may not be familiar with the revision, I have relegated it to the footnotes.

At this point, it is interesting to note that the Reformed Church constitution has "Church" with a capital letter when it refers to the denomination and "church" with a small letter when it refers to a local congregation. Although such a distinction may be helpful for the sake of clarity, one wonders whether it does not tend to minimize the local church. (cf. Art. 1, Sec. 1a; Art. 1, Sec. 4; and Art. 9, Sec. 2b, c, and Sec. 11).

A second problem here is the proper understanding of what the congregation is. Historically, the Reformed position has been that the congregation is bound to

the Word, the observance of the sacraments, and the exercise of the discipline of the Word? Although one judicatory is higher than another in the church of Christ, a synod is no more "church" than is a classis or a consistory. It is the Lord who has revealed himself who from his place in glory gathers his church; the judicatories are his instruments.

## B.

Basic to Calvin's thinking with regard to the government of the church was his conviction that the officers must be called. Because there is often much confusion about what it is to be called, it is well to note Calvin's discussion. He distinguished between the external and the secret call, both of which were necessary before a person could take office. The external call is that which comes through some type of election by the church or its members. Calvin goes to great lengths to explain how such election should be made. Particularly noteworthy is his definition of the secret call:

... that secret call of which every minister is conscious to himself before God, but which is not known to the Church. This secret call, however, is the honest testimony of our heart, that we accept the office offered to us, not from ambition or avarice, or any other unlawful motive, but from a sincere fear of God, and an ardent zeal for the edification of the Church (Inst. IV, 3, 11).

This definition of the call is important and striking in that it speaks of the zeal for the proper administration of the ministry of the church, and omits mention of any of the aspects of the mystical experience. Although there is room for the mystical experience of the call in Calvin's thinking, the eschatological tension noted above is also preserved in the doctrine of the call. Coming from the ascended Lord, the call takes place on earth in a very earthly way. Those who stand in an office have not been called to stand above the church and the world. On the contrary, they especially live in the tension of the last days, and manifest in their work both the power of the Spirit and the weakness of the flesh.

Calvin's concept of the call, which influences his whole understanding of the government of the church, places in the church order a strong predestinarian element. All presbyterian church orders are essentially grounded in the predestinating activity of God. It is God who in his

and ministers in a certain geographical area. In the new world, however, a minority position has caused the RCA gradually to accept the concept of a congregation as a body of believers meeting voluntarily together. The constitution through the last revision has come to accept the latter position, by adding the definition of a congregation (Art. 9, Sec. 2a) and changing "within their bounds" to "for them" in Art. 8, Sec. 27a. Four points can be brought against these changes: (1) This concept of the congregation undercuts the doctrine of predestination; (2) It brings the relation of church and state into greatest confusion, in that the church is no longer bound to any particular area; (3) Practically, it has been responsible for the loss of many Reformed churches in the "inner city;" (4) This latter concept of the congregation allows Christians to become very easily self-centered in congregational life.

sovereign freedom acts upon and uses his creatures in his service. God could have spoken to men in other ways, without any means or instruments, or by means of angels. In reality, however, God has chosen to use men and the church. The title of Book IV of the *Institutes* also indicates the important role predestination plays in the thought of Calvin with regard to church government. The title is, "On the external means or aids by which God calls us into communion with Christ, and retains us in it." Calvin then sees three such means, namely, the church, the sacraments, and the civil government. In other words, the whole of the discussion in the last book falls under the concept of God's call.

Only when this stress on the call and predestination is maintained can the presbyterian churches uphold their traditional church order. The elder takes a central position, because he has been called to his office. He is not lifted out of this world but remains completely in it. He is a member of the congregation, a grocer or a farmer, has a family, and shares all of the normal problems and concerns of the world. It is remarkable that in recent years all types of experiments are being carried out to bring the message of the Gospel to this world. Priests have entered factories as workers in France; chaplains are being hired by industry; many types of "layman's" clubs are springing up. Yet the central person in this whole endeavor, the elder who works in a factory or store, remains a forgotten man. It is precisely the elder (and also the deacon) who are God's first instruments in translating the Gospel for the world of everyday life.

The history of the church since Calvin indicates the very close relation of the doctrine of predestination to the office of elder. The Lutherans, who have been hesitant about the doctrine of predestination, have also been very hesitant about the office of elder. Congregationalism has very clearly displayed the relationship, in that a weakening of the doctrine of predestination and of the presbyterian form of church order appeared almost simultaneously. On the other hand, it was precisely the Synod of Dordt of 1619 which formulated both the Canons of Dordt and the church order of Dordt. In the opinion of the writer, there is a very close relationship between those two important acts of that Synod.

Thus not only because of the eschatological character of the church but also because of the strong predestinarian background, presbyterian constitutions have an "open" character, which keeps them always ready to hear the call of the Lord and to do his bidding. Not everything is stated or regulated by a constitution. The insistence of the church upon prayer at the opening and closing of all meetings of judicatories, and the possibility of special dispensations indicate the fact that Jesus Christ again and again does things which cannot be foreseen but must be accepted

by the church. The windows of the church in all of its activity are always to be open to the calling, electing, predestinating activity of God.

The fact that Christ is the head of the church and directs her activity combines with the point that the local congregation is as completely church as is the national synod, in such a way as to indicate that outside of Christ himself there can be no final authority in the church. Not only is it true that no one man can fulfill the role of the bishop, but also that no official assembly can take on such a role. There are certain things which a classis or synod can do which cannot be done by a consistory, but the reverse is also true. Thus the higher judicatories may consider appeals, but they cannot initiate disciplinary action with regard to individual members of the congregation. The various assemblies and offices in the church have their spheres of activity and may not intrude upon the office of another.<sup>2</sup> A general synod has certain authority in the church, but it does not rule all things in the national church. It cannot in all matters impress its will upon the classis or a consistory. It is to be regretted that many discussions concerning "centralization" and "decentralization" in the church have actually missed the entire point at stake, in that such discussion usually involves the concept of the location of final authority somewhere within the church on earth, thus either in the synod or classis or consistory or congregation.<sup>3</sup>

The lack of a final authority on earth means that the church must go forward by means of a constant conversation. Synods through their decisions and personnel must discuss with the classes, and classes and consistories must discuss with the synod. Ministers discuss with elders, elders with deacons, and deacons with ministers. The mere holding of the meetings of the various assemblies indicates the necessity of conversation within the church. Differences can be settled not by compromise, but only through the leading of the Holy Spirit, who also leads the church into all truth.

<sup>2</sup>The change which gives the classis the power to exercise original supervising power over elders and consistories would seem to confuse the proper relationship of classis to consistory, and make the classis to be a type of "bishop." In spite of some temporary advantages, this is a dangerous change in the constitution. (See Art. 10, Sec. 2.)

<sup>3</sup>The discussion revolving around Art. 12, Sections 18-21, would seem to involve the basic question of final authority. The proposals are based on the conviction that in our day it is necessary to have a "denominational program." Several questions can be raised. (1) Will the proposed executive council be so powerful an influence that the General Synod itself will discover it to be almost impossible to be a deliberative body? (2) Are there sufficient safeguards protecting the prerogatives of classes and consistories? (3) Does this insistence upon a "denominational program" with the proposed type of organization remain sufficiently open to the leading of the Lord? In my opinion, the need for some type of machinery to meet the present opportunities for the preaching of the Gospel is apparent, but one should be very careful in setting up such machinery, lest we destroy something essential to the proper government of the church. The church often has been tempted to trade something very important for a temporary benefit.

### C.

Through the work of the Holy Spirit, the one holy catholic church is given unity in form and life. Calvin lived in the faith that there was unity not only in the churches, but also in the church universal. Because he saw that the body of Christ could not and must not be divided, Calvin always wrote for the whole church, and when he acted, he acted in relation to the other churches in the world. His writings show that he wrote for the churches of Germany and England as well as for those of France and Switzerland. The divisions in Protestantism grieved him, with the result that he wrote many letters and traveled much in an attempt to reach some type of consensus with the Lutherans and Zwinglians. During the trials of Bolsec about the doctrine of predestination and Servetus concerning the doctrine of the Trinity, Calvin had extensive discussion and correspondence with other churches. Calvin stressed discipline in the church, but he did not exercise a type of discipline which simply meant that someone excluded from one church would be accepted somewhere else. Such discipline has lost its significance.<sup>4</sup> The concept of a number of churches standing next to each other as various denominations was foreign to the mind of Calvin. So far as he was concerned, the Reformation was a unity. The various dogmatic, liturgical, and constitutional differences did not stop Calvin from seeking fellowship with the others.

The fact that the church is one is of tremendous importance in the matter of church government. It simply is not true that each denomination has the right to set up its government in whatever way it desires.<sup>5</sup> The writing of church constitutions is an ecumenical task, even when it is done within the confines of one denomination. A constitution must be so written that it can serve the whole church and not just one small fragment. It is true that every church order must contain rules to cover specific and even rather local situations. Nevertheless, in all essentials, the constitution must be so written that it furthers rather than hinders the unity of the church. We do not simply write a constitution for the Reformed Church in

<sup>4</sup>No significant change is made in the revision with regard to discipline. It is exceedingly important that the ecumenical aspects of the problem be considered and indicated in the constitution, lest our discipline be either completely neglected or become sectarian in nature. Most of the major American denominations seem to have given up the practice of true discipline in the face of the difficulties involved in a divided church, whereas the Christian Reformed Church appears often to take a sectarian line in allowing extra-biblical positions to become cause for discipline. The whole section on discipline must be rethought in order that the principles of Calvin may be applied in our situation.

<sup>5</sup>In changing "the" to "this" Church (Art. 1, sect. 4, 5, 6, 7), the RCA has lost the ecumenical tension of the constitution. This change makes it far too easy for the RCA to escape its responsibilities toward the whole church. Having made this (small?) change, it now becomes possible to make many other revisions without reference to the whole church of Jesus Christ. Such a simple doctrine of the plurality of the church has often been attacked in Europe as a bowing to the spirit of modernism.

America, for example. We write a constitution for the Church of Jesus Christ, although it may be that at this moment it is only recognized by the Reformed Church in America.

Calvin's writings show that he believed that the only source for the practice of the church was the Bible. He quotes often from the Bible in his discussions of church government. Nothing may be done in the church which is contrary to the Word of God, and in so far as possible we are to regulate our practice by the works of the Apostles in the New Testament. On the other hand, Calvin recognized that not everything was stated in the New Testament, and saw the possibility that many amendments might be made as new situations arose. He wrote in his commentary on Acts 6:1:

We learn in this history that the Church cannot be so framed by and by, but that there remain somewhat to be amended; neither can so great a building be finished in one day, that there may not be something added to make the same perfect.

Calvin's followers have recognized the same point, and thus the Reformed synods held in the 16th Century ruled several times that specific texts of Scripture could not be demanded for every point.<sup>6</sup> The sober application of Calvin's thought to the formulation of constitutions is a necessity if the constitutions of presbyterian churches are not to lose their ecumenical nature.

As has become evident by this time, Calvin indicated that the church must have a "fixed form," a "legitimate form" and a "firm policy." The removal of laws conducive to such form would unnerve the church, deface and dissipate it entirely. Calvin laid great emphasis upon Paul's injunction that all things in the church be done decently and in order. While Christ has not prescribed every particular for the church, we must have general rules for the order of the church, which rules may be changed and amended as the needs and interests of the church may require.<sup>7</sup>

At this point it is also of importance to note that in the tradition of Calvin there are also boundaries with regard to church government. The Holy Spirit works not only through the church, but also through the state. The Kingdom of God is broader than the church. Calvin held that there must be separation of church and state, although this did not mean that the one was to be Christian and the other neutral. It is not the duty of

<sup>6</sup>The definitions of the church and congregation offered in Art. 9, sect. 2a, b, c are so far from the biblical meanings of the words that in my opinion they go beyond the possibilities of this rule. It is one thing not to require a text for every occasion; it is something quite different to write definitions into the constitution which are contrary to the meaning of the words of Scripture.

<sup>7</sup>In discussions, I have often noticed that although it is readily admitted that certain changes in the constitution are not in accord with Scripture, the changes are nevertheless defended by saying that this is a legal rather than theological document. This contrast is not valid, for it is far more proper to say that the constitution is an ecclesiastical document having legal and theological ramifications.

the church to take over the affairs of the state, or for the state to rule the church. Nathan does not rule over David any more than David may tell Nathan what to preach. The church order must recognize the proper boundaries with regard to the state and indicate them so that here too order and decency may prevail.<sup>8</sup> A second boundary for the church order is the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart. Thus the constitution cannot describe faith or piety in their essentials, anymore than it can fully regulate the conscience or prayer. It is probably for this reason that the Reformed and Presbyterian churches have always carefully distinguished between the liturgy, the hymnbook, the written confessions, and the constitution. Each has its own particular role and limits. Because of these limits, a church order is of necessity brief. Its scope is limited because it concerns basically only one aspect of the work of the Holy Spirit. There will always be many things in the Christian life which can not be referred to in the constitution.

\* \* \*

The eschatological, predestinarian, and ecclesiastical character of Calvin's thought makes it impossible to speak in terms of a Calvinistic system of church government. For Calvin and his descendents, there can be but one church government, and that is the government which comes from the crucified, risen, and exalted Lord, who rules and forms his church by his Word and Spirit, and will one day come to meet her.

<sup>8</sup>Section 55 of the old form of the constitution, stating that only ecclesiastical matters shall be transacted by ecclesiastical bodies has been dropped. This is unfortunate, for coupled with other changes, all indication of the relation of church and state has disappeared from the constitution. This can only lead to confusion. Although Section 55 had become somewhat dated historically, it could have been maintained and continued to do excellent service if more attention had been concentrated upon the office of deacon. (Cf. my article, "The Re-discovery of the Deacon," *The Church Herald*, March 21, 1958.)



## CALVIN'S DOCTRINE OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

WILLIAM L. HIEMSTRA

It is interesting to observe that John Calvin's chapter on Christian Liberty is substantially the same in the last and the first edition of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Calvin thought the subject of sufficient importance to include it in his "compendious summary of evangelical doctrine."<sup>1</sup> He regards it as an "appendix to justification" in the sense that Christian liberty is a necessary consequence for the believer who has been justified before God through faith alone.

Calvin was fully aware of the fact that the discussion of the subject of Christian liberty would precipitate criticism. The opponents of antinomianism would think him to be encouraging those who would make his doctrine an excuse for casting off "all obedience to God."<sup>2</sup> The Reformer believed it to be his duty to expound and not discard truth, however much men willfully distorted it. Christian liberty must be taught and believed if men are to have a "right knowledge of God" and enjoy peace of mind.

Calvin divides his treatment of Christian liberty into three parts. First, the believer is free from the law of God, its demands and condemnation. Those who are justified before God by Christ through faith are to "forget all the righteousness of the law."<sup>3</sup> Christ is the fulfillment of the law and his righteousness of the law no one can attain. Calvin is also conscious of a twofold use of the law for he says, "nor will this authorize anyone to conclude, that the law is of no use to believers, whom it still continues to instruct and exhort, and stimulate to duty although it has no place in their consciences before the tribunal of God."<sup>4</sup>

Calvin is most clear on the first part of this doctrine when he says, "there must then be no consideration of the requisitions of the law, but Christ alone must be proposed for righteousness, who exceeds all of the perfections of the law."<sup>5</sup>

When Calvin says that the believer is through Christ free from the law, he means more than freedom from the ceremonial law. He cites Galatians 3:13 ("Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us") and Galatians 5:14 ("Stand fast, therefore,

<sup>1</sup>*Institutes*, Book III, 19, 1.

<sup>2</sup>*Idem*.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.* 2

<sup>4</sup>*Idem*.

<sup>5</sup>*Idem*.



in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage") to prove that freedom from the law includes more than freedom from ceremonies. Calvin remarks that Paul is opposing the false brethren who sought to teach that obedience to the law would grant them favor with God, making Christ of no effect.

The second part of Calvin's doctrine of Christian liberty is that the believer, though free from the condemnation of the law as well as from its galling yoke, is still free voluntarily and joyfully to obey the will of God reflected in the moral law. This is man's highest freedom.

It is only after we have an appreciation for the perfect liberty of the Christian in Christ that we can begin to engage in the performance of the law. For how could men be encouraged to attempt any work if all are to be judged as those under the law, from which only a curse would be forthcoming. The believer will, as a child, hear God's call and from the heart desire to obey his will. Calvin says, "Such children ought we to be, feeling a certain confidence that our services, however small, rude, and imperfect, will be approved by our most indulgent Father."<sup>6</sup>

The third part of Calvin's doctrine of Christian liberty is "that we are bound by no obligation before God respecting external things, which in themselves are indifferent."<sup>7</sup> Calvin devotes ten sections of the *Institutes* to the treatment of the third part of the doctrine. He says that without this knowledge of liberty there can never be peace of conscience.

If the conscience has been freed from the terrors of the law and is joyfully bound to Christ, it may not be subject to the traditions and customs of men. If once the conscience is made subject to the regulations of men, the believer can no longer joyfully serve Christ for he will have become enmeshed in the vain ceremonies of men. Calvin suggests a practical illustration for his generation when he says, "If anyone imagine delicate food to be unlawful, he will ere long have no tranquillity before God in eating brown bread and common viands, while he remembers that he might support his body with meat of a quality still inferior. If he hesitate respecting good wine, he will afterwards be unable with any peace of conscience to drink the most vapid, and at last he will not presume even to touch purer and sweeter water than others. In short, he will come to think it criminal to step over a twig that lies across his path."<sup>8</sup>

Conformity in externalities is to be made to God's will, and when not bound by him, then surely the believer is not bound by men. If we are mindful that our liberty is before God, then all external things are subject to our liberty. In support of this Calvin quotes Romans 14:14, "I know that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him that esteemeth anything

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>8</sup>*Idem.*

to be unclean, to him it is unclean." If there exist a scruple of conscience, "those things which were naturally pure become contaminated to us."<sup>9</sup> All things are to be received as God's good gifts and to be used in a way most conducive to edification.

Calvin stresses that Christian liberty is a spiritual entity. It is of benefit to those who are subject to doubt the remission of their sins. It removes the anxieties of those who wonder if their imperfect works are acceptable to God. It quiets the tortured conscience which is troubled by the use of things indifferent. Christian liberty is therefore a spiritual truth.

Calvin is aware of the fact that hypocrites will desire to cloak their sensuality with the covering of Christian liberty. Liberty is not license to abuse God's blessings; it is freedom to be subject only to God. The Reformer scores those who would protect themselves in riotous living with the good name of Christian liberty. He writes, "But where they [entertainment, dress, etc.] are too ardently coveted, proudly boasted, or luxuriously lavished, these things, of themselves otherwise indifferent, are completely polluted by such vices."<sup>10</sup>

In addition he speaks of the propriety of laughter, food, new possessions, music, and wine. But in the excess of any of these propriety gives way to sin. In Calvin's words, ". . . to be immersed in sensual delights, to inebriate the heart and mind with present pleasures, and perpetually to grasp at new ones, — these things are very remote from a legitimate use of the Divine Blessings."<sup>11</sup>

Christian liberty is broad in that the believer may use or omit to use external things which in themselves are indifferent. Calvin would correct those who err in thinking that Christian liberty is non-existent if there is an omission of the use of externals. Christian liberty is exercised even if indulgence is greatly abridged. He deplores those "who imagine their liberty would be abridged, if they were not to enter on the enjoyment of it by eating animal food on Friday. Their eating is not the subject of my reprehension; but their minds require to be divested of this false notion; for they ought to consider, that they obtain no advantage from their liberty before men, but with God; and that it consists in abstinence as well as in use. If they apprehend it to be immaterial in God's view whether they eat animal food or eggs . . . it is quite sufficient."<sup>12</sup>

Calvin states that the liberty of the Christian is to be exercised with a view to the benefit of the neighbor. He distinguishes between a weak brother and a Pharisee, one whom we might call a stubborn brother. He cites many Scriptural passages which urge the strong to be mindful of the

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>11</sup>*Idem.*

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 10.

weak, such as Romans 14:1, 13; 15:1, 2; I Corinthians 8:9; Galatians 5:13. Because God is the friend of the weak, the Christian is to have a primary concern for the spiritual development of those weak in the faith and not provide them with an occasion for stumbling into sin.

When the believer is challenged by one possessing the spirit of the Pharisee he has a right and duty to assert his liberty before men. If our use of external things be done carelessly, we are guilty of giving offence. If discretion be employed and men take offence, the Christian is blameless. Calvin illustrates the application of the latter principal by referring to Jesus' words in Matthew 15:14, "Let them alone; they be blind leaders of the blind."<sup>13</sup> The Pharisees had taken offence at Jesus' teaching concerning the contrast between ceremonial and real defilement. Jesus says that they are to be let alone, and their offence disregarded.<sup>14</sup>

Calvin refers to Paul those who desire more assistance in determining who are to be accounted as weak and who are to be considered as Pharisees. Paul arranged for the circumcision of Timothy, but he could not be induced to circumcise Titus. In the former case Paul, "though he was free from all men, yet he made himself servant unto all,"<sup>15</sup> moderated liberty because of an advantage to be gained by this action. Paul would not permit Titus to be circumcised saying, "But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised, and that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage; to whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you."<sup>16</sup>

Liberty is to be restricted in its use if it is not beneficial to our neighbor. In this way the believer loves his neighbor as himself. But love to God is prior to love for men in the sense that duties required by God are to be performed without fearing whether or not men shall take offence. Calvin says ". . . whatever dangers threaten us, we are not at liberty to deviate even a hair's breadth from his [God's] command, and that it is not lawful under any pretext to attempt anything but what he permits."<sup>17</sup>

The conscience is free from the bondage of human authority. The conscience is directed principally to God, not to human government. Governments then are to be obeyed not because of any inherent authority they possess, but because of the authority of Christ. The believer is not to subject himself to the ordinances of men because of the prime fact that he belongs to Christ. Calvin says, "Therefore, as works respect men, so

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>14</sup>*Idem.*

<sup>15</sup>I Corinthians 9:19, 20, 22.

<sup>16</sup>Galatians 2:3-5.

<sup>17</sup>*Institutes*, III, 19, 13.

conscience regards God; so that a good conscience is no other than inward integrity of heart."<sup>18</sup>

It was because of Calvin's treatment of Christian liberty that the authors of the Westminster Confession of Faith could say with conviction, "God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in anything contrary to his word; or beside it in matters of faith or worship."<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>19</sup>*Westminster Confession of Faith* XX, 2.

## CALVIN AND FEDERAL THEOLOGY

DONALD J. BRUGGINK

Among the inheritors of the theology of Calvin there has perhaps been no single theological movement of greater scope than that of federal theology. There are those who would claim that the roots of this federal theology go back to Calvin. Indeed, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to be Reformed was to hold to federal theology, and even today the basic covenants of this system are taught in certain camps of staunch Reformed orthodoxy.<sup>1</sup>

But the theological effects of federal theology, many of which are still very much with us, necessitate raising the question as to whether this is really the logical development of Calvin's theology, which we should therefore refurbish, or whether it is a perversion, the effects of which we would do well to rid ourselves.

The rapid rise of federal theology does much to give credence to those who contend that it was inherent in Calvin's teaching. Within twenty years of Calvin's death the respected Reformed scholar, Ursinus, published his *Summa theologiae* in which he speaks of a *foedus naturae*.<sup>2</sup> A year later Stephan Szegedin published his *Theologiae sincere loci communes* in which he spoke of a *foedus generale*.<sup>3</sup>

It is not possible here to enter into an exhaustive examination of precisely where the covenant of works, as such, first arose, but it appears clearly in its essential form as early as 1594 in the academic "Antrittsrede," *de foedere Dei*, of the Dutch supralapsarian, Franz Gomarus, in which he holds a complete system of federal theology, including the essential elements of a covenant of works.<sup>4</sup> However, it should be noted that Gomarus nowhere speaks of covenants of works and grace, but rather of a *foedus naturale* and a *foedus supranaturale*.<sup>5</sup>

The earliest use of the specific terms *foedus operum* and *foedus gratiae* is found in the works of the first professor and first principal of the Uni-

<sup>1</sup>E.g., Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (3rd ed., Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1946), and the commonly used *Compendium* of H. Beets and M. J. Bosma (10th ed.; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957), pp. 12-13.

<sup>2</sup>Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics IV/1* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956), p. 59.

<sup>3</sup>Heinrich Hepp, *Geschichte Des Pietismus und der Mystik in der reformierten Kirche, namentlich der Niederlande* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1879), p. 208.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 213.

<sup>5</sup>Gottlob Schrenk, *Gottesreich und Bund im Alteren Protestantismus Vornehmlich bei Johannes Coccejus* (Gütersloh: Druck und Verlag von C. Bertelsmann, 1923), pp. 63-65. Schrenk, however agrees with Hepp, that here we have the form of the covenant of works, albeit not the name.

versity of Edinburgh, Robert Rollock, who published *Quaestiones et Responsiones aliquot de Foederi Dei*, . . . in 1596, and just a year later, *Tractatus de Efficaci Vocatione*, which also spoke of "God's two Covenants, both that of works and that of grace."<sup>6</sup> Thus, by 1596 we have even the term "covenant of works" explicitly used. In point of time, it is not far removed from Calvin.

It is the contention of some that the covenant of works was also not far removed from Calvin's thought, that it lay implicit in his writings, and only awaited the passage of time to be developed. But do Calvin's writings justify such a judgment? I think not. In the *Commentary on Genesis* there is a complete absence of any intimation of a covenant of works made with Adam. Nor is any such evidence found in those very chapters of the New Testament (Galatians 3-4; Romans 3, 5-6; I Corinthians 15; Hebrews 7) to which later federal theologians constantly turned for their evidence. To the contrary, we find that Calvin in discussing Jeremiah 31:31-34 states that "God has never made any other covenant than that which he made formerly with Abraham, and at length confirmed by the hand of Moses."<sup>7</sup>

However, beyond the fact that Calvin obviously thought in terms of a single covenant of grace, the question may still fairly be asked as to whether there might not be something implicit in his theology in which federal theology could luxuriate. This question might well be considered in relationship to the content of the covenant of works as it matured in the early 17th century, and has continued even to our day, a covenant of works that finds God entering into covenant with Adam, our federal head, with the condition that in return for obedience, Adam and those whom he represents will be confirmed in righteousness.<sup>8</sup>

A case can be made for such an implicit theological incentive to a covenant of works in Calvin's understanding of the *imago dei*. In Lutheran theology man is called into being by God as the crown of creation, the realization of the ideal humanity; he is, in brief, perfect.<sup>9</sup> In the Reformed view, however, there is something lacking, something which must yet take place.<sup>10</sup> Calvin can say that "the image of God was only shadowed forth in man till he should arrive at his perfection."<sup>11</sup> Or, again, "the state of man was not perfected in the person of Adam . . ." and "before the fall of Adam, man's life was only earthly, seeing it had no firm and

<sup>6</sup>Robert Rollock, *Select Works* (Edinburgh: Printed for the Wodrow Society, 1849), I, 25.

<sup>7</sup>*Comm. on Jeremiah* 31: 31-34. Cf. *Comm. on Matthew* 5:17.

<sup>8</sup>Cf. Berkhof, *op. cit.*, pp. 212ff.

<sup>9</sup>Heppe, *op. cit.*, p. 203.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup>*Comm. on Genesis*, 1:26.

settled constancy."<sup>12</sup> This must all be understood in relationship to Calvin's understanding of the *imago dei*, in which the *imago* is essentially a dynamic relationship, rather than a static being or quality. The *imago*

is God's action on man by the imprint of the Truth upon his mind, and becomes man's possession only in the active response of love and obedience. Therefore the strength of the *imago dei* and its continued maintenance in man lies in the Word of God and not in the soul of man. In a real sense the image of God in man is the communicated Word in which God's glory shines forth.<sup>13</sup>

It is because the Reformed do not view man as created in every respect perfect that the covenant of works can arise. If man is understood to be less than perfect at his creation, and if he is to strive for perfection, then there must be some way of reaching that goal; this necessity provides a theological incentive to, or opening for, federal theology.

Federal theology answered the question concerning man's possible perfection in terms of a covenant of nature or works, which, had it been kept for a probationary period, would have resulted in man's confirmation in righteousness. But this very answer, despite the fact that it is a response to a question implicit in Calvin's theology, stands in flat contradiction to his thought. For the answer involves a covenant of works, in which man *earns* by his works of obedience a confirmed or immutable state of righteousness. If one is to take seriously that this is a real covenant of works, and that man by his works could have earned a confirmation in righteousness, then one stands at odds with Calvin on two points: the sustenance of the *imago*, and the nature of the *imago*.

1) While Calvin was too busy proclaiming God's gracious action toward man in Christ to spend much time speculating about such "might have beens" as an immutable state, what he did say about the "firm and settled constancy" which the *imago* had not yet reached in Adam is quite in contrast to what we find in the covenant of works. As has already been pointed out, the sustenance of the *imago dei* for Calvin lies not in the soul of man, but in the Word of God. Essentially, the *imago* is retained not by works, but by grace.

Within the single thought of *imago dei* there is included a two-sided relation, but it is a relation which has only one essential motion and rhythm. There is the grace of God, and man's answer to that grace. Such an answer partakes of and subsists in the essential motion of grace . . .<sup>14</sup>

Man was not made with any settled constancy, but it was the intention of God that by living in this wise, in utter dependence on God's grace in a world which witnessed to him every day of how absolutely dependent he was

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 2:7.

<sup>13</sup>T. F. Torrance, *Calvin's Doctrine of Man* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1949), p. 52.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 80.

on God's unmerited kindness, man should eventually be endowed with a more permanent *imago dei* and a more permanent life.<sup>15</sup>

Note that the element of grace is retained even as man is endowed with a more permanent *imago*: " 'it behoves God to stabilize that which he has once put into us, for if He maintains it not by His grace all will go to decay.' "<sup>16</sup> There is no conflict of gracious and non-gracious elements in Calvin; at this point he is consistently gracious. A covenant of works at this point is inconsistent with a theology of grace to the very degree that it is taken seriously. Calvin's theology is closed to such an intrusion of a theology of works.

2) Federal Theology also shows itself to be basically at odds with Calvin insofar as the idea of an immutable confirmation in righteousness necessitates a change in the very nature of the *imago*. To accommodate this immutability the dynamic, gracious nature of the *imago* must give way to a substantive nature. Thus in the midst of the seventeenth century one finds the best of the Reformed speaking of the *imago* in static terms of essence, nature, and substance.<sup>17</sup>

To summarize the findings concerning the theology of Calvin and that of the later Reformed as it relates to the covenant of works, it is to be noted that 1) Calvin nowhere teaches a covenant of works, 2) explicitly states that God's covenant of grace is the only one he has made with man, 3) is essentially gracious in his doctrine of the *imago* whereas in the covenant of works the confirmation in righteousness of the *imago* is anticipated on the basis of works, which leads to the final observation that 4) this gracious and therefore dynamic *imago* is quite incompatible with the usually substantival *imago* of the later covenant of works. Thus, not only has the concept of the *imago* been corrupted, but works have been intruded into the relationship of God and man.

Proceeding to the discussion of the other covenants within the framework of federal theology, an even more serious perversion of Reformed theology is observable. Federal theology found its rationale in the covenant relationship, and therefore carefully sought out the parties to each covenant, together with the conditions, rewards, and punishments. Calvin had found in Scripture a single covenant of grace, but soon a covenant of nature or law was added. By 1596 Robert Rollock was using the term covenant of works, and by 1637 another Scot, David Dickson, had added

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>16</sup>Calvin, *Sermons on Job*, 7:7f., quoted by Torrance, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

<sup>17</sup>This can be seen, for example, in Polanus (1624), Maresius (1662), Wolleb (1626), A. Diest (1643), Bucan (1609), Heidan (1686), and Maastricht (1714). Heinrich Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, trans. G. T. Thomson (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1950), pp. 234-36.



a third covenant, the covenant of redemption.<sup>18</sup> While the name was new, the covenant was not, for the parties to the covenant of redemption were seen as God the Father and God the Son, covenanting in eternity to redeem mankind. But if God, Father and Son, were parties to the covenant of redemption, who were the parties to the covenant of grace? As in the covenant of works the parties were God and Adam, now again in the covenant of grace the parties are God and man.

While the covenant started out innocently enough, and was well handled by such divines as Samuel Rutherford and Patrick Gillespie, its inherent danger becomes obvious as the pressure of the Enlightenment with its exaltation of man's abilities, begins to press upon the theologians. Even the great Puritan, Richard Baxter, falls into a "neonomianism," facilitated by the triple covenant scheme: Man cannot fulfill the "legal righteousness" required by the covenant of works. In the covenant of redemption Christ satisfies the law for us. In the covenant of grace, however, we ourselves must perform the conditions of "evangelical righteousness"<sup>19</sup> as our part of the covenant conditions.

Our Evangelical Righteousness is not without us in Christ, as our legall Righteousness is: but consisteth in our own actions of Faith and Gospel Obedience. Or thus: Though Christ performed the conditions of the Law, and satisfied for our non-performance; yet it is ourselves that must perform the conditions of the Gospel.<sup>20</sup>

Just how far this takes Baxter from a true covenant of grace is indicated even more clearly in the following quotations:

Though Christ hath sufficiently satisfied the Law, yet it is not his Will, or the Will of the Father, that any man should be justified or saved thereby, who hath not some ground in himself or personall and particular right and claim thereto; nor that any should be justified by the blood only as shed or offered, except as it be also received and applyed; so that no man by the meer Satisfaction made, is freed from the Law or curse of the first violated Covenant absolutely, but conditionally only.<sup>21</sup>

I am now to shew, that he doth not justify by the shedding of blood immediately, without somewhat of man intervening to give him a legall title thereto.<sup>22</sup>

It was this "somewhat of man intervening" that marked Baxter, "The Reformed Pastor," as so thoroughly in step with his time, and so out of step with Calvin. True, not all theologians who held to the three covenants put the "conditions" as blatantly as did Baxter, but the very con-

<sup>18</sup>David Dickson, *Therapeutica Sacra* (Edinburgh: James Watson, 1697 [written in 1637, first published in 1656]), pp. 33-188.

<sup>19</sup>Ri. [Richard] Baxter, *Aphorismes of Justification* (2nd ed., Hague: 1655), pp. 47-48.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 70, italicized throughout.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 60, italicized throughout.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*

struction of the covenant of grace left the door wide open to Arminianism, and through that door, under the leadership of Daniel Williams, marched practically the entire body of English Presbyterians at the close of the seventeenth century.<sup>23</sup> Many of the New England Puritans who passed through this same door concluded their journey in Unitarianism — man having begun by doing a part, ended doing the whole.

The very fact that this "new law" which crept into the gospel is so totally opposed to Calvin's steady proclamation of grace must give rise to the question of whether we are to blame this perversion upon federal theology *per se*, or upon the humanism of the age. That the latter played a great part is undeniable. However, federal theology was hardly the innocent victim of the Enlightenment. Whereas Calvin insisted upon God's one gracious covenant with man, and understood man, even as he existed before the Fall, to be sustained by God's grace, the federal theologians brought in the concept of attainment by works — albeit works before the Fall. Nevertheless, the seriousness with which these pre-Fall works were proclaimed set the mood for putting works between man and God. The federal constructs which further insisted upon both parties fulfilling certain conditions as prerequisites to a valid covenant constituted a further danger, which, when paired with the triple covenant of works, redemption, and grace demanded works on the part of man to fulfill the conditions of the covenant of grace. Obviously, the federal structure played a culpable part in this theological ascendancy of works. True, some theologians, such as Thomas Boston, managed a theology of grace within a federal structure, but this was because of their clear understanding of the Bible, which enabled them to hold a theology of grace in spite of the temptations within the federal system.

The growth of federal theology within the Reformed camp had yet another debilitating effect. While Calvin had a strong biblical doctrine of the Church, Louis Berkhof notes that

It seems rather peculiar that practically all the outstanding Presbyterian dogmatists of our country, such as the two Hodges, H. B. Smith, Shedd, and Dabney, have no separate locus on the Church in their dogmatical works and, in fact, devote very little attention to it.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup>Olive M. Griffiths, *Religion and Learning* (Cambridge: University Press, 1935), p. 100. Those brethren in Grand Rapids who in 1853 and 1855 were so disturbed about the promotion of Baxter's works in church circles had ample cause for concern (*Classis Holland, Minutes, 1848-1858* [Eerdmans, 1950], pp. 144 & 181). However it is a bit strange to find in 1946 a work on theology (Berkhof, *op. cit.*, pp. 212ff.) issuing from that same city in which the author sees this triple covenant as a valid theological construct, and the equivalent of the earlier dual covenants of grace and works. Any construction which so readily opens the door to a new legalism, a mingling of works and grace for our salvation, is completely unworthy of the followers of Calvin.

<sup>24</sup>Berkhof, *op. cit.*, p. 553.

The blame for this lack of interest must be to a considerable degree attributed to federal theology.

In the Bible the Church is a gracious community, called together by God's Word. The biblical teaching about the Church constantly emphasizes the element of grace: it is the Body of Christ, dependent upon Christ the Head; it is dependent upon Christ as branches upon the vine; it is called, elect, chosen. There cannot be a biblical doctrine of the Church without grace.

But as there developed first a covenant of works, and then a covenant of grace into which works, albeit "evangelical works," played their part, the emphasis necessarily shifted from a gracious community to a working individual. This tendency was abetted by the emphasis upon individual covenanting in which the idea of a called community for all practical purposes disappears. Only by wide reading of the sermons of these federal theologians can one appreciate the tremendous individualistic emphasis that was part and parcel of federal theology.

This individualism, and federal theology as well, was further strengthened by the social movement in Western Europe that was breaking down the communal relationships of feudalism, with its relationships of status, and substituting the individual in a relationship of contract.<sup>25</sup>

It should also be noted that the very thought forms upon which federal theology was built, while so easily handled by the Western mind, were none the less destructive of the biblical doctrine of the Church. However, because these thought structures are still so very much a part of us, it is impossible to attempt to deal with them in an article of this size.

None the less, through the pressure of these forces, a religious hyper-individualism resulted with a corresponding devaluation of the Church. Instead of a dependent community called out and sustained by God's grace, the Church became a place where individuals were admonished to establish their covenant with God and where those already covenanting were guided both in strengthening their covenant, and examining it lest it be invalidated by some personal omission.

Thus it is not without reason that one searches in vain for a significant doctrine of the Church in Hodge, Smith, Shedd, or Dabney, for all of these men were the theological offspring of federal theology. Nor is it any wonder that within these very areas of the Reformed Church in America where theological interest is often the keenest, and where there are still roots in Dutch and Scottish federal theology, there should also be so little concern about the doctrine of the Church. Where there was a heritage of personal covenanting the individualistic emphasis of fundamentalism now flourishes. Both movements have the virtue of an individ-

<sup>25</sup>This is clearly mirrored in the political movements of the time.

ual concern, but both also share all too obviously the weakness of an impoverished doctrine of the Church, and one cannot ignore the Body of Christ without serious anemia in the Christian life.

Within these few pages the surface of federal theology has been barely scratched. Nevertheless, even in this brief glimpse of the system, it becomes evident that despite its popularity, federal theology was not a logical development of Calvin's theology. Rather it was a perversion of great seriousness, for it introduced a covenant of works as a valid relationship between man and God, and then carried works into the very covenant of grace. This, together with its detrimental effect upon the biblical doctrine of the Church, is enough to illustrate the desirability of abandoning any thought of refurbishing the system. Instead, a theology more faithful to the Scriptures must be sought, and in that quest for a biblical theology the Church will still find a faithful guide in John Calvin.

## CALVIN AND WORLD UPHEAVAL

ISAAC C. ROTTENBERG

### OUR PEACE

"The nations rage, the kingdoms totter . . . . The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Come, behold the works of the Lord . . ." (Psalm 46:6a, 7, 8a). Calvin in his commentary on this Psalm, states that the manner in which God is spoken of in this passage is intended to make us "look for peace from him, even when the whole world is in uproar, and agitated in a dreadful manner."

In the midst of turmoil, commotion and world upheaval we look for the peace which is from God. This is our basic affirmation. In and by itself, however, this confession is still open to a number of interpretations which in turn lead people to adopt the most divergent and even opposing attitudes. We must consequently ask ourselves what, in the context of a Reformed theology, it means that, in a world of tension and turmoil, in an era which is so much afflicted by conflicts and conflagrations, the Christian finds peace in God.

One of the perennially besetting temptations in Christian experience and thought is to regard the realm of historical realities as hopelessly lost and under the dominion of sin, and to seek refuge in a sphere which is considered the preëminent domain of the divine activity where one is allowed to enjoy the peace that comes from God in secure isolation from this world of historical realities. The road to divine peace is then sought by way of a consistent withdrawal from the world of social, economic, and political activities where nations rage and kingdoms totter, into the safe refuge of the inner experience and the mystical communion with God.

The basic problem with this view is that it is always in danger of losing sight of the fact that the peace about which the Bible speaks rests upon a faith which is born of the witness to the works of the Lord in which he has continually demonstrated his concern for the world of historical realities by entering into it and by being redemptively present in it. One must ask the question whether in the last analysis the above indicated view does really take the incarnation seriously.

When Calvin, and later Reformed theologians who followed in his path, beheld the works of the Lord of hosts, the God of Jacob, they saw the divine dealings as encompassing all of life and history. It is true that

the re-discovered biblical theme of the reconciliation of the sinner with God received the predominant emphasis, but the broad scope of the divine historical-eschatological dealings with the world was retained, and was once again given a more central place among subsequent theologians who paid more attention to the "ordo temporum" (Bengel) and the historical nature of the revelation. Human sin and rebellion, which have affected historical reality in such radical and catastrophic fashion, have not dethroned God. The Lord reigns; he remains the sovereign Ruler!

Frequently attention has been called to the employment of the doctrine of the sovereignty of God in Reformed theology. Writers in this tradition have indeed been particularly concerned to speak about God and his works in such a manner that it becomes unequivocally clear that he is the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last. When the nations rage and the kingdoms totter, and when, as in our own day, the world is threatened by totalitarian powers which set themselves up as the gods of the new age, and by the horrible prospect of total annihilation through atomic warfare, to multitudes of people it seems quite preposterous to persist in this confession of the divine sovereignty in history. It is therefore extremely important that we take particular care to clarify our meanings when we seek to give an account of the hope that is within us.

What is the source of our faith and the peace which it affords us in the midst of the vicissitudes of life? It must be admitted that especially in the post-Reformation period of "Protestant scholasticism" Reformed theologians, ever desirous to elevate the divine sovereignty, have at times indulged in a type of theological formulation and exposition which was bound to leave the impression that Reformed theology is essentially a systematic structure of rather abstract theologoumena with a philosophical flavor, which lacks the warmth and the joy of the gospel of grace.

We must be mindful of the fact that the Lord of hosts is the God of Jacob. In other words, the almighty and sovereign Lord whom we confess is the One who has revealed himself in his covenant dealings with man. Or, to return once more to an emphasis in Calvin's exposition on Psalm 46, we, who speak of God's immeasurable power, do so as those who know about his fatherly love. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who has revealed his faithfulness in spite of all human unfaithfulness, who in the fulness of time has revealed himself in Jesus Christ, and who, through the power and the presence of the Holy Spirit, establishes communion with man today, he is the God whom we confess as the sovereign Lord. We find our peace in God, not on the basis of abstract theological theories, but as those who are involved, who by the grace of God have been taken up into the divine covenant dealings, who have experienced God's fatherly love in Christ.

The God of Jacob is our refuge. Reformed theology is imbued with a joyful sense of the divine initiative. That is why the doctrine of election is a constitutive element in its outlook on life and history. God rules, and he is always ahead of us in his marvellous grace. Thus God is the First in his creative and re-creative activity. What wonderful comfort this confession contains! The divine providence has been supremely revealed in Jesus Christ in whom he has provided for the salvation of the world. He is also the last. All the divine dealings must be understood from the perspective of the end—the establishment of the kingdom of God—when he shall be all in all (I Cor. 15:28).

The raging of the nations, armed as they are today with the "ultimate weapon," at times fills our hearts with profound apprehension concerning the future of the world. The biblical perspective on history, which finds such a rich expression in some of the basic tenets of Reformed theology, reassures us, however, that the only genuinely ultimate realities are God and his kingdom.

#### GOSPEL AND CRISIS.

Our references to the modern means of destruction serve as a forceful reminder of the fact that our contemporary crisis has assumed new aspects and dimensions in comparison with world conditions in the past. In considering the topic "Calvinism and World Upheaval" we are deeply aware of this. We face different problems from, let us say, the time of the Reformation. This point hardly needs extensive explication. In a sense it could be said that we live in a new world. Political developments have shown the rise and decline of nations and empires. Constant changes take place in what we call the balance of world power. Various philosophical developments have left their impact on the world. Science and technology have radically altered our social-economic structures, our way of living, and to some extent our way of thinking. In our day we witness an increasingly rapid awakening of what we have been used to call "the backward nations." We are called to radical revisions, not only of our geographical maps, but also of our views concerning the universe and our concepts about the social-political and cultural relationships among the nations.

While it is, of course, imperative that we are fully cognizant of these developments and that we take them into account when we consider the question of the life and the mission of the Christian Church in the contemporary world, it is equally important that at the same time we remind ourselves that our new age and our new world belong in a real sense to what the Bible calls "this present age," the old order which is passing away. From the point of view of Scripture the inner drama of history is

still basically the conflict between the powers of the the new world of God's future and the forces of the old orders of this present age. In Jesus Christ the times have been fulfilled; these are the "last days," which for the Christian believer are qualified in an ultimate sense by the fact that in Christ "the age to come" has entered this present age and has already triumphed over it. This is crisis in the deepest sense of the word.

In this connection we should pause for a moment to consider briefly a theme which is found repeatedly in the writings of several of the Reformers, namely that the very presence of the new world of the kingdom brings with it crisis, commotion and upheaval in personal lives, in the Church, and in the world.

The proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom is an historical force of the first order. It always means crisis. We are perhaps too much accustomed to think of this exclusively in terms of personal experience. It is certainly true there too. When the truth of God's Word is pronounced over our lives, it throws our lives into turmoil. We are then confronted with the ultimate decision, precisely because God's decision in Christ is proclaimed to us.

The road to the new life passes through judgment and death. The preaching of the gospel of peace in Christ evokes in man the knowledge of sin. At least, then sin can be recognized as sin, guilt as guilt before God. Here lies the source of the crisis, both in the sense of judgment and decision. For we must lose life in order to gain it. The old self must die to itself, and then, as a gift of God's grace, be renewed in Christ and the power of his resurrection. The gospel of peace in Christ also evokes opposition, since the old self refuses to die and resists the power of the new life.

The same truth applies on a world historical scale. The Roman empire boasted in the harmony and political equilibrium of the *pax Romana*, a peace which had to be maintained at all costs. The very preaching of the *shalom* of the Lord, the peace of God in Christ Jesus and the rule of his kingdom, proved to be a threat to this so ingeniously established order. The Romans were inclined toward a large measure of religious tolerance and consequently permitted a variety of religious expression. Yet, the heralds of the gospel of peace, who proclaimed Jesus Christ as the King of kings and the Lord of lords, were persecuted as disturbers of the peace and enemies of the commonwealth.

There are always those who claim that the Christian religion is essentially a matter of inner experience and should in no way be intermingled with social-political or cultural affairs. This view lacks insight into the basic nature of historical revelation, as well as into actual historical developments. The very confession of Jesus Christ as Lord has political impli-



cations. The gospel refuses to be limited to a certain sphere of life. Where the message of the kingdom of God is proclaimed it shakes the foundations of personal and collective existence.

The truth of God means crisis. At times it evokes increased opposition and rebellion. The old order seeks to maintain itself in the face of the interruption of the new order. Thus wars and rumors of wars can actually become the signs of the approaching kingdom of God. They are in a sense the birth pangs of the new age.

"I came to cast fire upon the earth . . ." said the Lord (Luke 12:49). Calvin, in his comments on this verse, has stated that ". . . the meaning is, that Christ has introduced into the world utmost confusion, as if he had intended to mingle heaven and earth." We should therefore not tremble when the gospel kindles great commotions; Christ himself saw it as the manifestation of the fruit of his labor. "In like manner," continues the Reformer, "all the ministers of the gospel ought to apply this to themselves, that, when there are troubles in the world, they may be more diligently employed in their duty."

Crisis, judgment, but also . . . renewal. Here we touch on an emphasis which is particularly pronounced in the earliest Reformed theology, as compared with some of the other Reformation traditions. T. F. Torrance advanced a significant insight when somewhere he remarked that the Lutheran eschatology was mainly an eschatology of judgment, while Reformed eschatology was mainly an eschatology of the resurrection and the renewal of the world. This is an emphasis which is very much needed in our day. As we face the contemporary forces which oppose the Church and the message of the kingdom, the darkness of the times may press so heavily upon us that even the eyes of faith at last fail to see the signs of the presence and the power of the new world. A truly Reformed outlook on life and history must always be marked by a note of joy and triumph.

To those who, sometimes mockingly and sometimes desparingly, remark about the sorry state of affairs in the world even after two thousand years of Christianity, we must reply that the gospel is in essence not an idealistic scheme of world perfection, and that the reign of the living Christ is as yet very much hidden, save for those who behold the works of the Lord in faith. Christ rules in the midst of his enemies. The forces of this present age put up a tremendous struggle in their opposition to the power of the future of the kingdom which already has penetrated into the present. On the other hand, however, the crisis and tensions, and the apparent powers displayed by the forces of evil in our day should not lead us to stress the biblical theme of judgment at the exclusion of that of renewal. For instance, as we look at certain areas of Asia which are passing through a period of transition and turmoil, we can also think of the

young, independent and missionary-minded churches that have arisen there and of what they might mean to the future social-political and cultural development of that part of the world. Much is uncertain and hidden from our view, but the Lord of hosts, the God of Jacob, does never forsake the works of his hand.

#### THE CONTEMPORARY SCENE.

Little has been said in our discussion up till now about the concrete social and political problems that cause such grave concern in our day. It would be utterly presumptuous if we were to convey the impression that on the basis of the few preceding theological observations we could now turn to these immensely perplexing and complicated problems of our time and present "the Reformed position," or, even worse, "the Reformed answer." Anyone who has listened at all to the conversations among Reformed theologians, as well as those between them and theologians of other persuasions, knows that there exist sharp disagreements among them on such contemporary questions as our attitude toward colonialism, contemporary communism, race relations, the United Nations, disarmament, etc.

We shall not attempt to enter into all the various disputes and controversies on these issues within the brief compass of the remaining paragraphs of this article. When we seek to apply the truth of God's Word to concrete social-political problems we are inevitably involved in an inter-mixing of our interpretation of the divine revelation and our interpretation of the social-political constellations of the day. Some Christians' attitude toward Communism, for instance, is much influenced by their judgment concerning the cultural situation of "the West" in general and concerning the capitalistic system in particular. There are also questions of a technical nature. For instance, there are those who feel that all arguments that have been advanced in the past for the justification of war under certain conditions have become obsolete in view of the fact that a nuclear war is simply incomparable with any previous war. This leads to the highly technical question concerning the destructive potentialities of modern weapons.

What is the will of God on such questions? We cannot evade the problems by saying that the revelation cannot help us here, since it is only concerned with personal salvation. Is there then no Word from the Lord for these apocalyptic times in which individuals and nations face decisions of such stupendous magnitude? Yes, there is, and the Church of Jesus Christ must never cease in her passionate and prayerful search to find the Word for our day.

It is our task and privilege, as the spiritual heirs of John Calvin within the universal Christian communion, to share in this search. Acknowledg-

ing that we do not have a monopoly on Christian truth, we humbly and gratefully utilize the interpretations, accents, nuances and insights which a rich tradition has bequeathed to us, in our presentation of the Christian message. We do not offer the world a particular brand of Calvinism for its salvation, but the living Christ and his kingdom. We do not have fixed traditions, for we know that the Church which is truly Reformed is always in the process of being reformed.

The Church does not remain silent until a consensus has been found on all questions. Christian experience knows of spiritual unity which transcends many divergences of interpretation and opinion. This is true between the various Christian traditions, and also within one particular communion such as that of the Reformed faith.

In the midst of the contemporary world upheaval our first and primary task is to affirm our dynamic faith in the sovereign and saving acts of God, in the lordship of Jesus Christ and the presence of his kingdom through the Word and the Holy Spirit. It is, however, more important that we preserve the spirit of the Reformation and Calvinism than that we hold on to all the letters. It is so easily forgotten that the Reformation was in many respects a revolutionary movement imbued with the radical spirit of the prophets. Calvinism can mean little to a world in upheaval if it seeks to live in the past and does not dare to venture beyond a repetition of old phrases.

It is never superfluous to remind ourselves that our confession of faith implies our confession of sin, for the faith which we confess also testifies against us. This means that continuous reformation is only possible through continuous repentance. How often we stand in the way of our own witness, because in our self-righteous attitude we refuse to live in the world in the solidarity of guilt. We too, who proclaim the divine Word of judgment and salvation to the world, must assume our share of responsibility for the dreadful conditions in the world. It is not our intention to conclude this article with a list of the sins of commission and omission in the history of Calvinism. One question, however, is particularly disturbing, namely, how is it possible that where attempts have been made to give the Reformed faith concrete embodiment in social-political movements, these have often been marked by a static conservatism which seems so contrary to the inner spirit of our faith.

In this year of commemoration we are called to rededication. We do not serve the cause of "the West" or "the East." In joyful expectation we live toward the future of God's kingdom, and proclaim to the world that not the "big powers," either individually or collectively, but the Lord is the Ruler of the world, and that nothing — not things present, nor things to come — will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:39).

## CALVINISM AND THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

M. EUGENE OSTERHAVEN

Consideration of this subject sets before us two topics which should be of interest to every Reformed churchman. The ecumenical movement has often been referred to as the most significant phenomenon within the Christian Church in our time. I do not believe that any informed person would care to dispute that judgment. The Church is in a period of history which may be called the ecumenical age, whether for good or for ill — there are persons who would argue on both sides of that question — and wisdom necessitates recognition of this fact. There are not only local and national Church councils and a World Council of Churches, but there is a National Association of Evangelicals, a World Evangelical Fellowship, a Reformed Ecumenical Synod, A World Alliance of Reformed Churches, A Lutheran World Federation, and a number of other ecclesiastical organizations all of which bear testimony to the ecumenical consciousness and interests of the Christian leaders in our time.

The renaissance of interest in the writings and influence of John Calvin and the ecclesiastical tradition that stems from him is another of the developments which has received much attention in the Church at large and in the Reformed family of churches in particular. Illustrative of the new interest in Calvin in the Reformed churches is a statement of a spokesman for the Southern Presbyterian Church in the United States. Surveying his own denominational scene, he writes, "I believe the most healthy sign of the revived interest in Calvin is to be seen in the wide use of his writings in our denomination. When I finished seminary in 1926, I doubt that a single senior of any one of our seminaries had ever read Calvin's *Institutes*. Now I doubt that a single one has not read them in any one of our seminaries."<sup>1</sup> In this day of great interest in the ecumenical witness of the Church and of renewed interest in Calvinism what relationship, if any, is there between them? How have they, or may they, influence each other? This is the subject of the present discussion. Before such discussion can be carried on meaningfully, however, a definition of terms is necessary.

<sup>1</sup>J. Moody McDill, "Ecclesiastical Survey of the Southern Region," in J. T. Hoogstra (ed.), *American Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1957), p. 77.

Calvinism has been often defined and the definitions fall into three broad categories, defined by one of my colleagues as cultural Calvinism, broad Calvinism, and orthodox Calvinism.<sup>2</sup> The first, that which emphasizes the cultural aspects of Calvinism, associates with the term various social, political and economic consequences of the Calvinist creed and is sometimes preoccupied with them, perhaps even repudiating the faith while clinging to its fruit. The second, broad Calvinism, is more difficult to describe for it has no clearly discernable form, no precise theological formulation and may not use the terms Calvinistic or Reformed at all. It does not believe it necessary to believe in a particular doctrine of predestination, or of original sin, or of Scripture. Nevertheless it considers itself to be in the Reformed tradition and truly Calvinistic. As Dean Sperry once said, "The permanent and still most important influence of Calvinism on American life is to be sought and found not in its theology, but in its cultural conception of the relation of religion to life. At this point even those churches which are now theologically emancipated remain Calvinistic."<sup>3</sup> Dr. Paul T. Fuhrmann takes a similar position, declaring that "Calvin's true legacy is, indeed, not a system but a method, the method of striving to see everything — man, Christ, faith, the world, the Bible, religion, life — not from man's point of view but from the viewpoint of God."<sup>4</sup>

In his excellent study Dr. John T. McNeill tends to conceive of Calvinism in this same manner, finding it to be not a system of theology but something more subtle, more profound. He writes,

Its true spirit is found in faithful response to the Scripture revelation of a sovereign and redeeming God. While much else may be abandoned the renewal of this vital principle truly means the revival of the Calvinistic spirit; and it may well prove the most creative force in twentieth century Christianity . . .

[Calvinism] is a spirit suffused through many churches . . . It is characterized by a combination of God-consciousness with an urgent sense of mission. The triune God, Sovereign Creator, Redeemer, and Comforter, is an ever-present reality through both prosperity and disaster. Guilt is real, but it is submerged under grace. The Calvinist may not know how it happens; he may be a very simple-minded theologian; but he is conscious that God commands his will and deed as well as his thought and prayer. This is what makes him a reformer and a dangerous character to encounter on moral and political issues. He is a man with a mission to bring to realization the will of God in human society.

He knows, too, that the human heart, including his own, is deceitful and desperately wicked. This makes him a little distrustful of the sincerity

<sup>2</sup>Elton M. Eenigenburg, "The Reformed Faith and American Culture," *The Reformed Review*, Vol. 9, No. 4, pp. 70ff.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>4</sup>*God-Centered Religion* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1942), p. 23.

of idealistic utterances and professions, and likely to deliberate long on the choice of a cause to espouse. Yet when he knows what is God's will, and how it is to be translated into action of the hour, he will espouse it with courage, energy, and tenacity. God has not given him the spirit of fear . . . Calvinists, too, have often been troublers of Israel, assailants of the evils countenanced by the majority. We might say that this has been their trade and that when we find them acquiescent in a bad society they have given up working.<sup>5</sup>

A third definition of Calvinism is that which conceives it to be a body of theology and a *weltanschauung*, a world and life view, issuing therefrom. This conception of the subject is found in the essays of Drs. A. Kuyper<sup>6</sup> and B. B. Warfield,<sup>7</sup> stalwarts of another generation, and a number of writers of lesser renown. The matter is not quite so simple as might have been indicated, however. E.g., Kuyper speaks freely of the "several shades and differences" of opinion and emphasis among the Churches in their understanding and appreciation of "Calvinist" teaching. He takes satisfaction in the "free character" of Calvinism over against other ecclesiastical traditions which were dominated by prince or clergy, and sees Calvinism "rooted in a . . . specific religious consciousness [from which] there was developed first a peculiar theology, then a special church-order, and then a given form for political and social life . . ."<sup>8</sup> Like Dr. McNeill, Kuyper stresses the importance of the Calvinist spirit and there are places in his essay reminiscent of McNeill's conviction that Calvinism is a "combination of God-consciousness with an urgent sense of mission." However, the general classification may stand and our own position is, as Kuyper defines it, that Calvinism is a "life system," a definite way of life with spiritual, moral, social, cultural and political concern based on theological principles drawn from the Word of God as those principles are found interpreted in the historic creeds of the Reformed churches.

The ecumenical movement has been defined by Dr. W. A. Visser 't Hooft as "the movement in and of the churches which seeks to manifest both the unity and the universality (in the dynamic, missionary sense) which are inherent in the Christian Church . . . The term 'ecumenical' refers to the expression within history of the given unity of the church . . . [it comes] from the fact of unity in Christ. The ecumenical movement therefore embraces all such bodies as, on the international, national, or

<sup>5</sup>*The History and Character of Calvinism* (New York: Oxford, 1954), pp. 433-437.

<sup>6</sup>*Calvinism: Six Stone Lectures* (Amsterdam: Hoeveker & Wormser, n. d.), pp. 5ff.

<sup>7</sup>E.g., "Calvinism," in *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1949), Vol. II, pp. 359f.; "Present Day Attitude to Calvinism," in *Calvin Memorial Addresses* (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1909), pp. 225ff.

<sup>8</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 12.

local plane, seek to give expression to the solidarity and the fundamental unity of Christians of different confessions and denominations."<sup>9</sup>

Another definition which reflects the thinking of many is that the ecumenical movement is "the movement in the Church towards the recovery of the unity of all believers in Christ, transcending differences of creed, ritual, and policy. It endeavors to give expression to that unity by closer relations in conference, both for cooperation in common Christian tasks and with a view to the ultimate reunion of the Churches."<sup>10</sup>

## II

In attempting to sketch the relationship between Calvinism and the ecumenical movement our lack of space precludes the possibility of adequate discussion. We can, however, be suggestive and indicate as succinctly as possible what we conceive that relationship to be.

In the above definitions of the ecumenical movement, each given in a standard reference work, it is apparent that there is lacking unanimity in precisely what the movement is in its essence and objective. The first conceives it as a manifestation of the unity which Christians already have in Jesus Christ, whereas the second conjoins the prospect of the eventual reunion of the churches. In article after article Dr. Visser 't Hooft, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches and editor of *The Ecumenical Review*, rings the changes on the theme that "the ecumenical movement is not motivated by political, social or institutional concepts of unity, but by the biblical affirmation that the Church of Christ is one."<sup>11</sup> He avers that it "does not seek a return to the sociological unity of the *Corpus Christianum*, but promotes the spiritual and manifest unity of churches which seek together to be the Church in the world."<sup>12</sup> Nor does the ecumenical movement believe in unity "imposed by pressure or constraint but stands for that unity which expresses itself in the free response of the churches to the divine call to unity."<sup>13</sup> In its manifestation in the World Council of Churches it in no wise seeks to become the "Super-Church" but "seeks in its own life to avoid the dangers of concentration of power, of centralization and institutionalism."<sup>14</sup> He contrasts "a centralized, authoritarian, monopolistic and politically minded ecclesiastical system" with the "attempt to foster unity by purely spiritual means and with full recognition of the autonomy and specific charisma of each church

<sup>9</sup>"Ecumenical Movement," in *Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1955), Vol. I, p. 363.

<sup>10</sup>"Ecumenical Movement," in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, edited by F. L. Cross (London: Oxford, 1957), p. 977.

<sup>11</sup>*The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. 10 (1957-58), p. 376.

<sup>12</sup>*Loc. cit.*

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 378.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 379.



or confession."<sup>15</sup> He is astonished, in spite of all that has been said and done in order to show that the World Council does not believe in union *per se* and that "doctrinal relativism is not an ally but rather a danger for true ecumenism," that voices are still heard which maintain that the World Council of Churches minimizes truth. The "only unity [the World Council is] concerned with is unity in obedience to truth."<sup>16</sup> Not every coming together of churches advances the cause of true unity. "It may be sought," as the World Council's Committee has declared, "without due regard for truth in doctrine and soundness in order."<sup>17</sup>

Dr. Visser 't Hooft states his position clearly and consistently but there are those within the ecumenical movement who are not satisfied with the kind of program he proposes. Another of its spokesmen pleads for one united Church, for the abandonment of denominations, "the transformation of its [the denominations'] theological seminaries into ecumenical institutions," and loyalty to Christ instead of to the Bible which, when used authoritatively, is "the great divider of the Church."<sup>18</sup> The "master problem" which the ecumenical movement has set itself to resolve is "the relation between two churches — the ecumenical church, on one hand, and the denominational church, on the other. These two churches are mutually exclusive. If we have denominational churches, we cannot have the ecumenical church." The ecumenical church conceived at Oxford and Edinburgh and at Amsterdam "is an amorphous thing. We cannot see it. We cannot lay hold of it. It eludes our grasp . . . a phantom church . . . It is this amorphous character of the Church of Christ, its formlessness, its intangibility, its invisibility and its empirical impotence that the ecumenical movement is out to overcome. In a word, the whole aspiration and purpose of this world-wide movement among Christians is to bring the Church of Christ into an empirical existence so that we *can* see it, *can* lay hold of it and so that it *can* lay hold of us and draw us into itself. The goal of the ecumenical movement cannot be envisaged in any terms short of the actual embodiment of the now unembodied Church of Christ."<sup>19</sup>

These two conflicting conceptions of the *raison d'être* of the ecumenical movement give rise to occasional confusion in discussions of the subject and, with resurgent confessionalism and the ensuing emphasis on denominational life and loyalties on the one hand, and continuing emphasis on the weaknesses of denominationalism on the other, it does not appear that the problem will soon be resolved. In order properly to estimate the

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 383.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, Vol. 8 (1955-56), p. 22.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>18</sup>C. C. Morrison, *The Unfinished Reformation* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1953), pp. 26ff., 60, 194ff., 205.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 53f.



ecumenical movement, however, it is necessary to observe that there are both schools of thought within it.

But what of Calvinism's estimate of this movement, of this attempt better to manifest the unity which Christians have in Jesus Christ? The answer to this question depends in large measure on the conception of the Church that is held. The position of John Calvin and Reformed theology on the Church has often been stated and needs only bare outlining here.<sup>20</sup> Calvin and Reformed theology took with utter seriousness the one holy catholic and apostolic Church of Scripture and history. Cyprian's dictum, *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*: outside the Church there is no salvation, is the position of Calvinism. Calvin's own writings are particularly clear in this matter in the *Institutes*, the *Tracts*, and the *Commentaries* and no student of Calvin or son of the Calvinist tradition can afford not to read them with care. In a word, Reformed theology and Calvinism believe that there is only one Church and that it "is called Catholic, or universal, because there could not be two or three Churches without Christ being divided, which is impossible."<sup>21</sup> The caption of article twenty-seven in *The Belgic Confession*, unlike the English translation, reads simply *De Ecclesia Catholica*. Its statement on the Church is similar to those found in other confessional statements of the Reformed churches. This is true of the old Hungarian confession whose title is, significantly, *Confessio Catholica*; of the *Second Helvetic Confession* which stresses the fact that, in spite of the divisions within the Church militant the Church is one and that the many particular churches "must all be referred to the unity of the Catholic Church;"<sup>22</sup> and of the others. Indeed, Calvin and his collabor-

<sup>20</sup>*Vid.* John T. McNeill, "The Church in Sixteenth-Century Reformed Theology," *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. XXII (1942), pp. 251ff.; *Unitive Protestantism* (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1930), pp. 68ff., 178-220; Wilhelm Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1956), pp. 182ff.; Th. Werdermann, "Calvins Lehre von der Kirche in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung," in *Calvinstudien*, J. Bohatec (ed.), (Leipzig: Verlag von Rudolf Haupt, 1909); Geddes MacGregor, *Corpus Christi* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1958), pp. 43ff.; A. M. Hunter, *The Teaching of Calvin* (Westwood, N. J.: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1950), pp. 152ff.; The Reformed confessional statements in P. Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, Vol. III.

<sup>21</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. John Allen (6th American ed.; Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Christian Education, 1932), IV, 1, 2. From among the scores of citations that could be offered from Calvin to support the contention that he believed in one, catholic Church I offer the answer in the Genevan Catechism, prepared for the instruction of "little children" (*les petits Enfants*) in Christian doctrine, on why the word "catholic" is used in the creed. The child (*L'Enfant*) replies: "It is to signify that as there is only one Head of the faithful, so they all ought to be united in one body. So there are not many Churches, but only one which is spread through all the world (Eph. 4:3; I Cor. 12:12, 27)." *C.R.*, XXXIV, p. 39.

<sup>22</sup>Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1877), Vol. III, p. 869.

In an interesting passage on the catholicity of the Reformed Church W. D. Maxwell writes that the Church of Scotland "has never used the description 'Protestant' but always 'Reformed'. The Church of Scotland is not a new protest-

ators felt strongly that the Reformation was needed because of the lack of catholicity in the Church. The Church had become too "Roman" in some areas and too "Greek" in others. It was no longer catholic but had become provincial and errant. The reformers would restore it to its true catholicity.

Inasmuch as Calvin and the Reformed theologians of the Reformation period believed that there is only one Church they felt that it was mandatory that they seek to demonstrate this unity by cooperative enterprise. Calvin's efforts in this matter, along with the efforts of others, are traced by Dr. McNeill, whose judgment is that "the idea of a catholic unity dominated the church theory of Calvin. Practically too he exhibited an ecumenical outlook and combined with a strict conception of doctrine a surprising degree of ecclesiastical liberalism."<sup>23</sup> What was true of Calvin was true likewise of Bucer and Beza, of Cranmer and Bullinger. Throughout their entire formative period the leaders of the Reformed churches stressed the desirability and the necessity of Christian cooperation and that spirit has been a characteristic of the major part of the Calvinist tradition since that time.<sup>24</sup> In principle Calvinism has been not only receptive to the idea of a manifestation of Christian unity but has actively fostered and encouraged it.

### III

The result of the interest and activity of the Reformed churches in Christian unity has been that they have made a significant contribution to the ecumenical movement. Space forbids our doing more than mentioning this fact in passing. Were we to neglect doing so in a paper on this subject, however, we would be doing the Calvinist tradition an injustice. For it has been at the center of ecumenical discussion and has given that movement much of its leadership. Among the multiple and diverse communions that make up the Church catholic the Reformed churches in the words of Dr. H. P. Van Dusen, "occupy a place which is close to the center, perhaps closer to the center than any other communion."<sup>25</sup> They have

ing Church formed at the Reformation, but she is the ancient Church of Scotland, Catholic and Reformed." "The Elements of Liturgy: Reformed," *Ways of Worship: The Report of a Theological Commission of Faith and Order*, edited by P. Edwall, E. Hayman and W. D. Maxwell, (London: SCM Press, 1951), p. 122.

<sup>23</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 217. Calvin's letter to Cranmer in April, 1552, is typical of his feeling in the matter. Lamenting the "severed" condition of the Church so that "the body lies bleeding," he says, "So much does this concern me that, could I be of any service, I would not grudge to cross even ten seas, if need were, on account of it." He feels so strongly that the various churches ought to "unite" that he thinks it "right . . . at whatever cost of toil and trouble to seek to obtain this object." Jules Bonnet, *Letters of John Calvin*, (Edinburgh: Thomas Constable and Co., 1847), Vol. II, p. 333.

<sup>24</sup>McNeill, *op. cit.*, pp. 257ff.

<sup>25</sup>Henry P. Van Dusen, "The Relation of Princeton and Evanston Main Themes," in *Proceedings of the Seventeenth General Council of the Alliance of the Reformed Churches Holding the Presbyterian Order* (Geneva: Office of the Alliance, 1954), p. 147.

given the ecumenical movement their witness to the necessity of sound doctrine, their insistence that church order is not the criterion of a true church, and they have emphasized the doctrine of the oneness of the Church of Jesus Christ. Moreover, the Alliance of the Reformed Churches holding the Presbyterian Order is the first confessional alliance to have been constituted, thus setting before each member and the whole Church an example of wide interest in the entire far-flung family of sister communions while steadfastly insisting on its loyalty to the whole Church of Christ.<sup>26</sup>

For our purpose, however, whatever contribution the Calvinist churches may have made to the ecumenical movement is not as important as the lessons which may be learned from it. That there are such is beyond question. We hope that the suggestion of a few of them does not seem presumptuous.

First, one is impressed at an ecumenical gathering with the many fine Christians who are outside the Reformed family of churches! This fact might surprise some persons and it is a humbling, though gentle, reminder to all. The kingdom of heaven is broader and larger than Calvinism. The Holy Spirit has been at work in other fellowships also and sometimes the fruit of his activity is more evident in them than among us. We love our tradition, but calling ourselves Calvinists is no guarantee of ecclesiastical greatness or the Spirit's blessing. We are Jesus' friends when we do the things that he commands us. We are sons of Calvin when we share his passion for doing the will of our Father. Calvin knew and we know that there are many outside our ecclesiastical Zion who know the Lord and who are known of him.

Secondly, study of the ecumenical movement brings before one remembrance of the great apostasy of Protestantism during the last two hundred years. There has been thrilling recovery in the last decades due to the revival in biblical and theological studies, but evidence of the illness and its debilitating effects are still with us. It is this that chills the ardor of many a solid churchman who might otherwise heartily endorse ecumenical interests. The weaknesses which he sees in other fellowships may also be in his own but when he sees them more broadly and objectively they appear more shocking.

There are those who would discount the present significance of the long period of theological liberalism within Protestantism but in many cases they do so in the interests of a cause for which they are pleading. Within the literature on the ecumenical movement, particularly, one can find all the evidence he needs, and more than he desires, that the effects

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.* John A. Mackay, "The Witness of the Reformed Churches in the World Today"; *ibid.*, pp. 116f.

of the older liberalism have not disappeared. If our own sampling of the literature is a fair test — who can do much more than that with the abundance of material that has been written? — there is much that is heart-warming to one who takes the Scriptures and his theological inheritance seriously. There are also points of view against which he may feel that he has to stand with all the firmness that his soul can muster.

A third lesson which one may draw from the ecumenical movement is a better appreciation of the Church as understood in Reformed theology. The doctrine of the Church evokes no interest in some circles. Until recently that was true of large sections, if not most, of Protestantism. The ecumenical movement has caused a re-thinking of the doctrine of the Church which has been most beneficial to all participants.<sup>27</sup> The Church is the body of Christ. It is holy. It has the living Lord for its head. He loved the Church and gave himself for it. The doctrine of the Church stands at the center of Reformed theology, not at its end. Within the ecumenical movement there are fellowships which are more "church-conscious" than many "Calvinist" people. It is stimulating to fraternize with such and to learn something of that which we have known — or ought to have known — all the while.

One learns also in considering the ecumenical movement that there are certain elements in the faith which are more important than others and that the things that we have in common with other Christians are more important than those matters which divide us. Calvin makes this point in his first chapter on the doctrine of the Church:

All the articles of true doctrine are not of the same description. Some are so necessary to be known, that they ought to be universally received as fixed and indubitable principles, as the peculiar maxims of religion; such as, that there is one God; that Christ is God and the Son of God; that our salvation depends on the mercy of God; and the like. There are others, which are controverted among the churches, yet without destroying the unity of the faith . . . . A diversity of opinion respecting these non-essential points ought not to be a cause of discord among Christians. It is of importance, indeed, that we should agree in everything; but as there is no person who is not enveloped with some cloud of ignorance, either we must allow of no Church at all, or we must forgive mistakes in those things of which persons may be ignorant without violating the essence of religion or incurring the loss of salvation. Here I would not be understood to plead for any errors, even the smallest, or to recommend their being encouraged by connivance or flattery. But I maintain that we ought not, on account of every trivial difference of sentiment, to abandon the Church, which retains the saving and pure doctrine that insures the preservation of piety, and supports the use of the sacraments instituted by our Lord.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup>Cf. John T. McNeill, "The Church in Sixteenth-Century Reformed Theology," in *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. XXII (1942), p. 251.

<sup>28</sup>John Calvin, *op. cit.*, IV, 1, 12.

A last lesson which we shall mention is the zeal of the radical groups in Christendom. These can give historic Calvinism — at least in its more staid communions — some shocking surprises. For the truth is that these groups now have the enthusiasm which the Calvinist people had in days gone by. These latter have become too sophisticated to go out into the highways and byways to compel the people to come in, leaving this task to the "evangelistically-minded" churches. Is it any wonder then that the Lord blesses these groups that do his bidding, that honor his command? The radical churches and sects, which are also a part of the body of Christ, are an embarrassment and a challenge to the Calvinist churches today. We can also learn from them in the ecumenical encounter and the experience will do us good.

#### IV

We conclude with a word on the Calvinist witness in the ecumenical movement. A witness of some kind there will be because we *are* in. We can no more escape associations with other Christians and other fellowships in this shrinking world than we can escape contacts with the Russians — or the Dutch! — in matters of state. What then ought our witness to be? Without presuming that we have been blessed more than others we offer the following suggestions:

The Calvinist witness should be to the living God who has redeemed us in Jesus Christ and before whom we live. *Coram Deo!* We live consciously in his presence as did Calvin and St. Paul before him. As the doctrine is central and determinative in Calvinism, so it must be in the ecumenical movement. The Reformed churches have been historically conditioned to give faithful witness to this element in the creed of the whole Church of Christ. Our first and our last responsibility is to God whom we know as our creator, our Father and the Lord of all.

Calvinism must continue to witness to the normative character and the authority of the Word of God. This seems commonplace to us for this has been a part of our inheritance. But not all of our Christian brethren are accustomed to give the sacred Scriptures the same place in ecclesiastical and personal affairs that the Calvinist churches, in their better days, at least, have given them. As this has been a characteristic of them, as the history of the Church records, it must become increasingly a characteristic of the whole body of Christ. It is our responsibility to cause that to come to pass so that the other sheep too may hear the voice of the Shepherd more clearly.

Calvinism must contribute its interest in doctrine to the ecumenical movement. When some voices are raised depreciating doctrine as a basis on which to get together, the Reformed Churches have the responsibility of insisting that unity must be based on mutual understanding of mutually

accepted truths. The Church needs an adequate understanding of theological truth; without it she languishes.

The Calvinist churches can also witness to their conviction concerning the ministry of the Church. Lesslie Newbigin, a bishop in the Church of South India, has well written during the discussions concerning the ministry of that Church during the time of its formation, "If a validly ordained celebrant [in the Anglo-Catholic sense—M. E. O.] is the absolutely indispensable condition of a sacrament, so that without this there is no sacrament, then this fact must determine the whole doctrine of the Church. In that case one will be committed to a view which bases the Church entirely on valid ministerial succession. When this is accepted the whole Biblical view of the nature of the Church is lost."<sup>29</sup> This and other elements in the Reformed conception of the ministry of the Church must continue to be made in ecumenical conversation and the Reformed churches are in position to provide that service.

Calvinism must also witness to the reality and necessity of the life in Christ. Since the days of the great Reformer the tradition that has been named after him has had written in its history, if not always in the actual life of the Church, that the gospel means fellowship with the risen Lord and a life lived to his praise. Some of the finest chapters in the *Institutes* are those sections in the third book where Calvin is writing about the Christian life. The burning heart offered to God was to Calvin both theory and practice. As he extended himself, to live for his Lord in his day, Calvinism must do the same in ours. That is possible, however, only when we have union with Christ. Where are the Christians in our circles with the burning hearts? It must not only be those in the fringe groups who manifest enthusiasm for the things of the Lord. Calvinism too has had that blessing. In union with him who is our head our witness will be true.

<sup>29</sup>*The Reunion of the Church* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1948), p. 178.

## CALVINISM AND OTHER ISMS

GARRET WILTERDINK

From the title of this paper, one might assume that it would deal with the non-Christian and pseudo-Christian cults of our day. This is not the case. The word "ism" is used here to refer to those great world-views which make their claim on the ultimate loyalty of man, which profess to be of supreme value or import in human existence. We shall consider the political and cultural as well as the religious claims which man today finds vying for his loyalty. Over against these claims we shall attempt to define and evaluate the place of Calvinism in the world of our day. The task as thus defined looms up with overpowering immensity. Thoroughly to consider all of its ramifications is beyond the scope of this paper and the ability of the writer. I shall therefore seek to delineate that in Calvinism which I feel is its unique contribution and then attempt to show the need for this emphasis in the situation of modern man.

### THE QUALITY OF CALVINISM

I title this section in this way because I feel that Calvinism is not truly an ism in the sense of an exclusive sectarian movement. Historically Calvinism has been an integral part of mainline Protestant Christianity. While some Calvinistic groups have evinced a sectarian attitude (an attitude unfortunately found too often within our own fellowship), this is not a result of their Calvinism and in reality violates its spirit. Calvinism at its best never considers itself to be *the* true Christian church nor even a separate, exclusive branch of Christianity. It is rather a certain emphasis within the Body of Christ which its advocates consider to be true to the biblical witness. I am well aware that some may differ with this description in principle, while others will agree in principle but contradict that principle in practice. This, however, is the understanding of Calvinism with which I approach my subject.

*The Predominant Trait:* If one hundred people conversant in Christian theology were asked what is the predominant trait of Calvinism, perhaps ninety-nine would respond, "The sovereignty of God." It is true, this has been the preoccupation of many Calvinists throughout much of the past 400 years. At times it has become such a dominant concern that it has almost developed into a terrible threat held over theological inquiry and



even over human life. Truly to understand the significant contribution of the Calvinistic emphasis, however, I suggest that we lift our gaze from this rather restricted preoccupation with divine sovereignty.

I believe that the predominant and persistent trait of Calvinism at its best is what we may call a stubborn theocentricity. This is a much broader view than that of divine sovereignty alone; it is more true to the biblical witness; and it is really the emphasis of Calvin himself. Subsequent generations of Calvinists seem to have overlooked the fact that Calvin does not discuss the question of election and predestination until almost the end of Book III of his *Institutes*, then only as an attempt to explain the operation of the Holy Spirit and *after* a thorough discussion of faith. At the same time, many seem to have forgotten that Calvin *begins* his exposition of Christian truth with the chapter, "The Connection Between the Knowledge of God and the Knowledge of Ourselves," and says that "it is evident that . . . our very existence is nothing but a subsistence in God alone."<sup>1</sup> And again, "no man can arrive at the true knowledge of himself without having first contemplated the divine character."<sup>2</sup> This theocentricity of Calvin is a perspective upon all reality, a viewpoint from which all of life is surveyed and understood. It is the biblical perspective and includes human responsibility as well as divine sovereignty, freedom as well as election. It contains the balance of the biblical outlook. It enables us to view reality in terms of the dialectic of revelation. Thus Calvinism views the acts of men in terms of the acts of God. It is more concerned with revelation than discovery.

Unfortunately, Calvinism has not always maintained this balanced view, the view of him from whom it takes its name. Within a century of the great Genevan's life, his professed followers had so lost the balance of his views, exchanging his theocentric perspective for a one-sided emphasis on divine sovereignty, that the terms — justification by faith, freedom, and love—had almost lost their meaning. In their concentration upon God, they had almost forgotten man. This false kind of theocentricity fails to understand the biblical message, which emphasizes the worth of man seen in the light of God's self-giving love and his call to a responding love on man's part. A truly theocentric viewpoint sees the grandeur of man in God's love for him. God's gift of freedom, his call to repentance and the biblical emphasis upon faith make this clear. Revelation, as God's self-disclosure, also reveals *man* in the misery of his estrangement, and in his glory as a child of God.

*The Balancing Power:* The theocentric perspective on life is a necessary balancing power in our world. It alone can provide the necessary correc-

<sup>1</sup>*Institutes*, Book I, Chapter I, Paragraph I.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, paragraph II.



tive to the omnipresent anthropocentricity evident in contemporary political, cultural and even in much religious concern. Humanism unchallenged makes man the measure of all things. The end result is the loss of any transcendent values as the basis of human life. The human good becomes many conflicting human goods and we move from anarchy to chaos. The basic danger in all man-centered viewpoints is that they end up denying that which they affirm. Man finds it impossible to be consistently man-centered without the perspective and drawing power of a loyalty above himself. Man cannot be man-centered because he is self-centered man. To be truly man-centered he must be freed from self-centeredness so that he can stand above himself.

We see that the need for the balancing power of the theocentric outlook is closely related to the problem of human self-transcendence. This is undeniably a distinctively human capacity, but the theocentric understanding through revelation shows us that this capacity has become lost through sin — mankind has lost its true humanity. The self-transcending capacity can only be restored by the transforming power of God effective through faith. This faith and the grace which is its other side, are the correlatives of the theocentric perspective on human existence.

The theocentricity of Calvinism produces a true view of man as a child of God. Equality, morality, value — all grow out of this viewpoint. The humanist says that man must live for mankind. The Calvinist insists that man must live for God. His true vocation is to glorify God. Humanists must be placed among all those who "worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator." This is the essence of idolatry and leads to the deterioration of human culture. The theocentric perspective, on the other hand, gives mankind many vital and precious things: truth—in an absolute sense, meaning—within the scope of existence, purpose, direction, value—for self and life, and true personality. The implications of these claims in specific cases will be considered in the next section. Let this suffice for a broad outline of the need for the balancing power of the theocentric perspective on life.

#### CALVINISM AND MAN TODAY

With these tools in hand, let us attempt to structure the importance of the Calvinistic emphasis in the world of modern man. Perhaps it should be noted at the outset that we are not imposing something new when we speak of the Calvinistic emphasis. Indeed the western world has grown up with the theocentricity of Calvinism, if not always in its hand, at least at its elbow. The importance of the Calvinistic attitude in the development of western culture comes into focus when one considers the place of strong Calvinists in the settling and growth of our own country.

Indeed, we present nothing new. But perhaps we do need to present it *anew*, in renewed form. The church has too long been content to speak to the world in the categories of the past. Those categories had gradually lost their meaning for the man of today. This has resulted in many serious and sincere doubts as to the meaningfulness of Christian truth for our modern age. Many have set aside the claims of religion in favor of the political and cultural claims which appear more relevant to the contemporary situation. It is time for the church to awake; not to change its message, as some seem to think, but rather to present the eternal truth of religion in the garb of today; to make clear the supreme relevance of Christian faith to the crisis of modern man; and to reveal the inadequacy of the other claims on his loyalty.

*Political Claims — Totalitarianism:* Among those forces which seek to claim the supreme loyalty of modern man is the political. The danger of this claim upon man today is its totalitarian quality. It seeks not to arouse interest in the political realm as one aspect of human concern, but makes its claim upon his absolute loyalty and exalts the political realm to the status of ultimate concern. It seeks man's complete dedication and subjection to the goals of the cause. The totalitarianism which is uppermost in our generation is communism, though some maintain with some cogency that fascism is a greater threat within our own country.

It is quite patent that totalitarianism is anthropocentrically oriented. Each such cause claims to have the good of mankind at the heart of its concern. However, while claiming a humanistic basis, a man-centered concern, totalitarianism inevitably ends up denying human rights. Here we see concretely the basic danger of all anthropocentricity: its inability to be consistently man-centered. While some totalitarian movements ostensibly champion human equality (e.g. communism), in practice they are guilty of the most violent persecution of all who do not conform to the prescribed goals. The humorless farce of totalitarianism is seen in its inhumanity in the name of humanity, its sacrifice of man for the sake of mankind. Closely related to this is the fact that, in spite of its claims to be man-centered, the totalitarian cause quickly reveals its lack of respect for the value of the individual. How can it claim to respect man in general when it does not respect him in particular? How can it claim to save mankind when it destroys men? These questions put in bold relief the practical impossibility of a true and consistent anthropocentricity in any human institution.

Communism provides an excellent specimen with which we are all familiar to a large degree. We must admit that the evil against which Marx and Engels rebelled was real and amenable to correction. However, communism today reveals that all it accomplishes is the substitution of the totalitarianism of the proletariat for the totalitarianism of the econom-

ically privileged class. Proclaiming a classless society, it succeeds only in producing another class. An interesting parallel may be noted in the growth of unionism in America. While we imply no essential relationship to communism, it must be recognized that many of the professed goals of unionism are very similar to those of communism. At their best, unions have a balancing influence on the economy of our nation and have blessed our land. At their worst, unions have made totalitarian claims upon their members. Denouncing the dictatorship of the capitalists, unions have often produced an equally diabolical dictatorship of their own. Inveighing against the tactics of management, they have proceeded to use the same tactics for their own purposes. Here again is evident the evil extremes to which all uncorrected anthropocentricity extends. The monster into which communism (and unionism) has grown is not an accident precipitated by disloyalty to the true communist cause. It is the logical and inevitable outcome of the man-centered quality of the totalitarian view of life.

Over against the extremes of totalitarianism, the Calvinistic theocentric perspective gives a true understanding of man, individually and in community. As an individual, man has infinite worth because God values him. He is a potential child of God. Calvinism is not optimistic about unregenerate human nature, but it reflects the deeper optimism based upon the love of God. "God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." This is the basis of the theocentric evaluation of man.

This perspective also gives a true understanding of man in community. God is the source and ground of all fellowship. Our relationship to him (Love God) is the basis of our relationship to all others (Love neighbor). Man's vocation is to glorify God by reflecting his love and justice in true community. Christian communism is the ideal, bearing many external similarities to totalitarian communism, but fundamentally different in that its source is theocentric. It arises spontaneously out of the heart of man's relationship to God. It is not imposed from below but infused from above, not required by human aspiration but inspired by the indwelling Spirit of God. Far from being the "opiate of the people," the theocentric life has a progressive vitality unmatched by any other ideology.

Finally, the Calvinistic theocentric outlook must categorically reject totalitarianism because it recognizes that no one and no thing but God has the right to make an absolute claim upon the life of man. God is the source, meaning and end of man's existence. To make anything else one's ultimate concern is to lose one's humanity in the hell of idolatry.

*Cultural Claims — Scientism:* Another area in which the man of today is confronted with a claim upon his ultimate loyalty is that of culture. Outstanding among these is the claim of scientism. Note that the *ism* is not science but scientism. Science, rightly understood, makes no such

claim upon mankind. It does not seek to capture the central place of man's concern. We are not, therefore, inveighing against science or denying the truth which true science has opened to human view. Our concern here is rather with those who have made science their religion and with the danger of this movement in our day. Scientism thus defined has turned its back on true science. It has become science run wild, science turned unscientific. In making supposed science its ultimate concern, scientism misapplies the principles of science to areas in which true science must admit ignorance. Where science ends, scientism takes over.

The insidious quality of this claim on man today lies in the fact that converts to scientism may become so gradually and almost unconsciously. They may be almost unaware of the presuppositions on which their view of life is based. Reverence for the scientific method has become so pervasive in our society that many seem to forget its limitations and consciously or unconsciously make it the foundation of their world-view. This subtlety means that the threat of scientism is on our very doorstep, it has a strong hold even within our churches. For some within the church, the fortress of faith has been surrendered and, while they continue in the external observance of religion, it has lost all relevance to their existence. Others are consciously struggling with the questions which scientism presents. How does Christian faith relate to the new-found knowledge of science or is it antiquated and inadequate? One of the many disturbing facets of this claim on human life today is the open insistence in our society that we must give our best minds, the "cream" of the coming generation to science. This is our hope, we seem to be saying. One hears this voice even within the Church. This is deeply disturbing and reveals to what extent we have deserted true science and are entertaining the presuppositions of scientism.

The theocentric perspective obviously precludes the viewpoint of scientism, but my concern here is not to defend theism against atheism or supernaturalism against naturalism. Rather I wish to show how inadequate is the anthropocentrism of scientism.

First let it be seen that scientism is bound to anthropocentricity because of its naturalism. Only the universe exists. Man is the highest being in the universe, he is the one who views the universe through the scientific method, therefore man is supreme. Man is not even viewed as a creature since there is no creator. The universe is everything and the highest product of the universe, man, is the preoccupation and concern of the devotee of scientism. But in its great concern for man, scientism reduces man to something less than human. The scientific outlook seeks to reduce all to uniformity through organization. The end result would be the flat-

tening of all life into the single dimension of natural, necessary process. Man thus becomes a thing, a product of a universe ruled by necessity.

Such a view of human existence is intolerable. The uplifted voice of the existentialist cries out against the inadequacy of the scientific outlook. While existentialism itself is equally inadequate in its anthropocentric extremes, it reveals the failure of objective scientism to satisfy the subjective reality of human existence.

The fallacy of scientism is that it thinks that science can reveal the whole of things (like the ants inside the ping pong ball). Its failure to do this is seen in its utter inability to answer the deepest question of human existence, which is not "what?" but "why?", not knowledge but meaning.

The realm of morality is also crucial. The presupposition of the scientific viewpoint is progress. Progress is the salvation of man. Man will progress onward and upward to the ideal state. This optimism of the scientific outlook was terribly jolted by the two world wars and the subsequent developments. What must be seen now is that these were not just a temporary setback in the inevitable progress of mankind. Instead it must be seen that they reveal the basic fallacy of the concept of progress. These catastrophies came after a period of tremendous progress in every field of scientific endeavor. Thus they stand as mute testimony to man's lack of progress in morality, the ability to live together. And the advocate of scientism who has his eyes open today, can see that it is not over yet. Never before in human history has morality been so obviously lacking in international relations as it is today. The outlook is that progress will not be man's salvation but rather his destruction. Anthropocentrism always fails at the point of morality for it lacks the transcendent standard on which morality must be based. Its ethical standards are avowedly relative, subject to opinion and change. Such standards are bound to collapse of their own weight.

Another failure of scientism is its inability to account for freedom or even to acknowledge its existence. The logical consequence of the scientific outlook is absolute determinism. Thus in the deepest sense, the man-centeredness of scientism robs man of his true humanity. Man becomes just another thing produced by an impersonal universe.

The theocentric viewpoint of Calvinism speaks loud and clear at this point. It sees man's freedom as the concomitant of the love of God. God has made man a moral being, free even to hate his creator. This God-giveness is the true foundation of human freedom. The theocentric perspective also sees the true personality of man in the light of the personality of God. Personality belongs supremely to God. Man is personal as a creature of God, created for fellowship with God. The Calvinistic empha-

sis enables us to see how estrangement from God has deprived man of true personality and how restored fellowship with his creator makes man truly personal again.

The theocentricity of Calvinism is badly needed today to correct the extremes of incipient scientism. And it can fill the void which scientism, logically concluded, leaves in the soul of man.

*Religious Claims — Fundamentalism:* In the realm of the religious claims upon the life of man, we must obviously use our tools in a different manner. Flagrant and obvious man-centeredness is, of course, not involved. The same issues, however, are at stake. I have chosen Fundamentalism here, *not* because it represents a position directly opposed to the Calvinistic outlook, but rather for two other reasons. First, it is a strong element in the American religious scene and the application of the theocentric principle to its emphasis characterizes the contribution of Calvinism in the contemporary religious situation. Secondly, I feel that Fundamentalism has often become an issue within our own fellowship and still is today. I believe we must take a long, hard and candid look at its foundations. I do not set forth Fundamentalism as a claim on ultimate loyalty in conflict with the Christian faith. I view it as a movement within the Church which to some degree presents an approach differing from that of Calvinism. Let it be understood then, that the fundamentals of Fundamentalism are not here in question. We hold these truths in common. It is rather the attitude and approach which Fundamentalism takes to the human dilemma which I wish to scrutinize.

Not all who are called Fundamentalists are alike in their approach to the crisis of modern man. Some close their eyes to the issues and thus desert the arena of faith. Others strive to deal intelligently and feelingly with the issues involved. The group, however, with which I am here concerned are those militant Fundamentalists whose characteristics will become clear and recognizable as we analyze their position.

Fundamentalism, characterized by this group, is essentially a defensive movement. It arose in the face of biblical criticism and scientific knowledge which it found intolerable because incompatible with its tradition. In the face of these threats, the reaction of Fundamentalism is neither retreat, nor attack, but entrenchment. The immediate cause on the Fundamentalist side is an extreme biblicism, approaching bibliolatry. The issue is not the question of biblical authority, as some still seem to think, but rather of biblical interpretation. The Fundamentalist entrenchment is not a defense of the Word of God but rather of a particular tradition of biblical interpretation. It is not a defense of divine revelation but of human understanding. It reflects not so much a high view of Scripture as a rigid and limited one.

Thus, I feel that while Fundamentalism is opposing an obvious form of humanism, it is itself guilty of a subtle form of the same thing. I speak of the anthropocentricity of bibliolatry, the worshipping of a particular tradition of biblical interpretation instead of the Living Word whom the Book proclaims. Being closed to the illumination made available by science and biblical criticism, Fundamentalism departs from a theocentric perspective and becomes guilty of the anthropocentricity of maintaining its own position in spite of evidence to the contrary.

Even this subtle kind of man-centeredness leads to legalism. A rigid standard takes the place of the living struggle of faith — the divine-human encounter. Faith becomes a list rather than a living reality. Its lack of the theocentric outlook often leads Fundamentalism astray into exclusiveness and into passing judgments not commensurate with the data of revelation. Thus we find the movement frequently lacking in the seeking humility of those who depend upon the divine self-disclosure.

Fundamentalism's five points are in many respects *too little* rather than too large. They reduce the height and depth of God's revelation into a legalistic rigidity.<sup>3</sup> The fulness of revelation can never be fully captured by a dogmatic statement. Such must always be a finger pointing to the more.

Fundamentalism has done American Christianity a real service. It has helped to stem the tide of extreme conclusions riding on the wave of scientific discovery and biblical criticism. For this we owe it a debt of gratitude. Our gratitude must not, however, blind us to the fact that underneath the surface the Fundamentalist is close kin to the scientist. Both are literalists, seeking truth largely by descriptive and analytical methods.<sup>4</sup> This is, of course, a man-centered approach to truth and is foreign to that found in the Bible. Applicable to this point are Paul's words, "the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life." One fears that the Fundamentalist has lost the ability to stand with mouth-open awe before the mystery of revelation. To lose this capacity is dangerous if not disastrous.

A proper application of the theocentric principle will enable us to avoid the pitfall of Fundamentalism. We shall maintain the vitality of a living faith, an appreciation for the mystery of revelation and an openness to truth from whatever source it may come. This abiding contribution of Calvinism is our spiritual heritage.

The theocentric perspective on human existence is not to be evaluated only on the basis of its pragmatic value as a balance to the destructive

<sup>3</sup>L. C. Rudolph, chapter on "Fundamentalism," in *The Church Faces the Isms*. (New York: Abingdon, 1958).

<sup>4</sup>Samuel H. Miller, "The Church and the Scientists," in *The Ecumenical Review*, July 1957.

extremes of man-centered ideologies. Its value at depth is that it relates man to reality. This *is* our Father's world. God *is* the Creator and Redeemer. We *are* his children through faith. Calvinism's theocentric view of existence relates man meaningfully to the reality which is now shrouded in mystery but will one day be fully known.



## CALVIN IN JAPAN

DONALD J. BRUGGINK

With the mention of Calvin one thinks immediately of Geneva, or perhaps the Netherlands, or Grand Rapids — but rarely of Japan. But Calvin is also in Japan, for one of the most influential groups within Japanese Protestantism are the Reformed Presbyterian churches. Not only are these Japanese sons of the Reformation aware of their Reformed background, but they are also very conscious of the power that lies in their roots. As evidence of this there exists the Calvin Translation Society in Japan.

The purpose of this society? To publish all of Calvin's commentaries in Japanese. Their own succinct explanation for this desire is that "the majority of Calvin's works are still unknown to average Christians in Japan. If his works are translated, it will not only strengthen and enrich the life of the church in Japan but will also greatly influence the general climate of thought." The importance of this to a young church necessarily without deep theological roots of its own, and therefore far more easily swayed by the "latest" theologians and scholars, can hardly be overestimated. It speaks exceedingly well of the Japanese scholars in this project that they are so cognizant of the importance of their roots in Geneva.

The Society has already formulated a plan for the 1959-64 period (marked by the 450th anniversary of Calvin's birth in 1559, and the 400th anniversary of his death in 1964). During this period the Society plans to translate and publish ten volumes of Calvin's commentaries on the New Testament. That these commentaries will find a market is indicated by the fact that when Volume I of the *Institutes* was published over 20,000 copies were sold! A truly remarkable phenomenon in view of the fact that Protestant Christians in Japan number only around 300,000!

Western Theological Seminary can also take pride in its own indirect part in this project, for one of its sons, the Rev. I. John Hesselink, R.C.A. missionary to Japan, has been instrumental in helping to organize the Society, and remains one of its sponsors. The sponsorship of this society reads like a meeting of a Japanese Reformed Alliance: Wm. A. McIlwaine of the Southern Presbyterian Church, Leonard Sweetman of the Christian Reformed Church, Richard H. Drummond of the Presbyterian U.S.A., I. John Hesselink of the R. C. A., while the Japanese, Masaichi Takemori, Nobuo Watanabe, Takeshi Matsuo, and Norie Akiyama, represent the

three major groups of Reformed church life in Japan. All of these men are exceedingly well qualified for sponsorship, either through their linguistic skills (French, Latin, Japanese, English) or theological acumen.

Also among the sponsors is Tetsuo Kohmoto, president of the foremost Protestant publishing house in Japan. Of course a project of this magnitude takes a considerable sum of money, especially in view of the fact that the whole purpose of the Society is not in making a profit, but in a wide dissemination of Calvin's writings. This means, in effect, that publication will be subsidized. The sum of \$10,000 is necessary to get the project under way, after which the sale of the commentaries will be sufficient to provide the funds for additional publications.

Most of us are able to have Calvin's commentaries in our libraries through the efforts of The Calvin Translation Society which over a century ago had its headquarters in Edinburgh, and whose translations the Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. have reprinted for us. Having been so blessed by the efforts of others, let us not let the struggles of our Japanese brethren go unaided. Funds are needed, and are needed now as *Romans* and *Hebrews* are to be published in 1959. Your checks can be sent either directly to Mr. Tetsuo Kohmoto, Calvin Translation Society in Japan, c/o Shinkyo Shuppansha; 1, 3 Chome Shin-Ogawa-Machi; Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo, Japan or to their American correspondent, Donald J. Bruggink, 2705 Reservoir Avenue, New York 68, N. Y.

## CAMPUS HIGHLIGHTS

The new school year opened for students and faculty at Western with convocation lectures delivered by Dr. John H. Gerstner of Pittsburgh-Xenia Seminary, Pittsburgh on September 9-10. The general theme of the lectures was "Notes on the Preaching of John Calvin." The first lecture was "John Calvin's 'Two-Voice' Theory of Preaching." The second was an illustrated lecture, "The Life of John Calvin, Preacher." At the formal Thursday morning Convocation Dr. Gerstner addressed the Seminary on "A Comparison of the Preaching of Calvin and Jonathan Edwards." These lectures were a fitting introduction for the John Calvin anniversary year.

Thursday noon the convocation luncheon was served in the Commons. The Rev. Henry J. Ten Clay, '42, president of the Board of Trustees, was the speaker for the occasion, an observance of the 75th anniversary of the resumption of theological instruction in the West, in the Reformed Church in America.

Friday morning, September 11, regular class lectures were begun, opening the 93rd school year of the seminary. Dr. Lester J. Kuypers resumed his teaching in Old Testament studies, after a sabbatical year in Palestine and Europe. Dr. Kuypers reported a happy and profitable year during his travels.

We are happy to welcome the members of the new Junior Class into the seminary fellowship. They are as follows: Larry Arends, Holland; John Bandt, Neshkoro, Wisconsin; Paul Benes, Holland; John Brouwer, Edgerton, Minnesota; Merle Brouwer, Edgerton, Minnesota; John Bylsma, Edgerton, Minnesota; Gordon Damsteegt, Waupun, Wisconsin; Robert De Forest, Duaneburg, New York; William DeForest, Duaneburg, New York; Lambert DeJong, Bellflower, California; David DeRuiter, Hollywood, California; James De Witt, Muskegon, Michigan; Robert DeYoung, Muskegon, Michigan; Alvin Eissens, Fulton, Illinois; Ronald Geschwendt, Kalamazoo, Michigan; John Hamersma, Paterson, New Jersey; Edgar Higgins, Pasadena, California; Vernon Hoffs, Sheldon, Iowa; Larry Izenbart, Grand Rapids, Michigan; Jerome Julien, Oak Lawn, Illinois; Moses Keng, Manila, Philippine Islands; Sung Hun Lee, Korea; Donald Lindskoog, Chicago, Illinois; Donald Lohman, Hamilton, Michigan; George Magee, Clawson, Michigan; Philip Miles, Eaton Rapids, Michigan; Richard Stadt, Grand Rapids, Michigan; James Stevens, Holland; William Unzicker, DeMotte, Indiana; Vernon Van Bruggen, Valley City, North Dakota; Kenneth Vanden Broek, Holland; Sam Vander Schaaf, Ontario, Canada; Mel Van

Hattem, Grand Rapids, Michigan; Gary Vander Kamp, Newton, Iowa; Byron White, Albuquerque, New Mexico; John Zwyghuizen, Zeeland, Michigan.

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Students of the Senior and Midler classes have returned from interesting and profitable experiences in their summer fields. The members of the senior class and the fields they served are as follows: Allen Aardsma, Primghar, Iowa; Ted Bechtel, Lisha Kill, New York; Allen Boeve, DeMotte, Indiana; Louis Buytendorp, Hope Church, Chicago; Wilbur Daniels, Glen Lake, Michigan; Grover Davis, McKee, Kentucky; Robert Eggebeen, Newton, Iowa; and First Church, Pella, Iowa; Louis Harvey, Fal-mouth-Moddersville, Michigan; John Helmus, Whalley, British Columbia; Harold Hiemstra, Elmendorf Church, New York City; Leroy Koopman, Palm Springs, Florida; George Kroeze, Los Altos, Long Beach, California; Rudy Kuyten, Gano Church, Chicago; Harry Mencarelli, Doster, Michigan; Harold Patz, pulpit supply; Arnold Punt, Trinity Church, Battle Creek, Michigan; Richard Rhem, Ebenezer Church, Holland; Robert Shaver, Castro Valley, Oakland, California; Louis Smith, pulpit supply; Brook Stephens, Annville, Kentucky; Robert Strain, First Church, Denver, Colorado; Douglas Vander

Hey, Lester, Iowa; Nathan Vander Werf, Tonquish Village, Detroit, Michigan; Vernon Vander Werff, Canoga Park, California; Merwin Van Doornik, Parkview Church, Santa Ana, California; Hendrick Van Essen, Vancouver, British Columbia; Harvey Van Farowe, Parma Church, Cleveland, Ohio; Robert Wallinga, Chandler, Minnesota; John Zwiers, pulpit supply.

The members of the Middler Class and the summer fields they served are: Robert Bast, Mountain View Church, Denver, Colorado; Marvin Beukelman, Perl Mack Church, Denver, Colorado; Roger Bruggink, Fairview Church, Canton, South Dakota; Howard Davis, Forest Home Church, Muskegon, Michigan; Raymond DeDoe, Spring Lake, Michigan; Wilfred Fiet, Emmanuel Church, Chicago; Marvin Hoff, Fairview Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan; Wallace Osland, Dolton, Illinois; Truman Raak, Mount Greenwood, Chicago; Norman Ratering, Chicago Classis Extension Work; John Rozendaal, Eddyville, Iowa; Frank Shearer, Calvary Church, South Holland, Illinois, Robert Vander Aarde, Lansing, Illinois; Roger Vander Kolk, Ivanhoe Church, Chicago, and II Grand Haven, Michigan; Robert Vander Schaaf, Fellowship Church, Muskegon, Michigan; Robert Van Earden, pulpit supply; William Van Malsen, First Church, Detroit, Michigan; Daniel Van't Kerkhoff, Flint, Michigan; Erwin Voogd, Buena Park, California.

## BOOK REVIEWS

*The Book of Leviticus*, by Charles F. Pfeiffer, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1957. Pp. 60. \$1.25.

This book appears as one of the first of a series of projected study manuals of biblical books. The Shield Bible Study Series began with a volume on the Epistle to the Hebrews by Gleason L. Archer, Jr. This new volume is by one who, having his Ph. D. from Dropsie College, now occupies the chair of Old Testament at Gordon Divinity School.

The study of Leviticus here presented is in outline form and the author's outline is quite acceptable. Occasionally he delves into the Hebrew underlying the English translations via a not too consistent transliteration and gives some linguistic explanation of Hebrew sacrificial terms. He does not base his study on any particular English version, but he does now and again point out weaknesses of the King James Version.

The manual makes frequent references to the New Testament parallels and fulfillments of the priestly ritual in Leviticus, which the author dates entirely in the time of Moses and Aaron. It is somewhat weak in the matter of comparisons and contrasts with the worship forms of Israel's neighbors, but an occasional reference to the materials found at Ugarit is made.

Some confusion in verse references in the manual for Leviticus 5 and 6 reflects the difference in the Hebrew and English numbering of the verses there. This needs correction. However, all in all, it is practical for study on introductory levels.

—SYLVIO J. SCORZA

*Illustrations from Biblical Archaeology*, by D. J. Wiseman, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1958. Pp. 112. \$3.50.

The British Museum is a treasure house of fascinating relics of world history of all periods and all lands. Of particular interest to the student of the Bible is its unexcelled collection of Near Eastern artifacts and inscriptions. D. J. Wiseman, the Assistant Keeper in the Department of Western Asiatic Antiquities of the museum, presents in this new publication photographs of "items which directly relate to both Testaments, together with a selection of those which generally illustrate some aspects of the biblical era" (p. 6).

The majority of the illustrations are from Mr. Wiseman's own museum, but these are supplemented from museums all over the world and from periodicals dealing with Near Eastern archaeology. Now the author admits that "Photographs must always be . . . a poor substitute for the objects themselves" (p. 6), but for those who have not visited the famous museums these pictures will serve as an inducement to make such a visit and for those whose visits were several years ago they will indicate the progress made by archaeology in recent years. For the author has prepared a valuable sampling of the material remains which throw light upon the background of the Bible. The text accompanying the illustrations is well done and several charts assist the reader in understanding the development of writing in biblical lands. Everything is up-to-date, with reports as recent as 1958.

As editor of the archaeological journal *Iraq*, Mr. Wiseman has edited

some very important ancient texts himself. He recently published the Babylonian Chronicles in which Nebuchadnezzar's campaigns against Judah are narrated, by which we now know the day and month of Jerusalem's surrender in 597 B.C. and its fall in 587 B.C. The bibliography also recognizes the importance of the archaeological journals in breaking the news of season-by-season discoveries of the men on the field. It is a fairly complete bibliography, divided as the book is divided into the periods ranging from the pre-historical (e.g., the lowest levels of Jericho and of Ubaid, Iraq) to the early Christian Church (depicted in the diggings at Dura Europus).

The reader comes to realize the important part played by the Egyptians, Assyrians, Hittites, Canaanites, Persians, Greeks, Romans and others in the history of God's people of the Old and New Testaments as he reviews the panoramic view of that history herein given. The format of the book is itself illustrative of the wide view presented for Staples Printers, Limited have made it a book whose width is almost twice its height. The glossy paper also assists in the attractiveness of the volume. That this can be delivered to the general public at such a good price is high commendation to author, printers and publishers.

SYLVIO J. SCORZA

*The Pastoral Epistles, An Introduction and Commentary*, by Donald Guthrie, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957. Pp. 228. \$3.00.

This introduction and commentary is a part of *The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* under the general editorship of Professor R. V. G. Tasker. This book by Dr. Guthrie is the third of a projected eleven in the series. Other previously published volumes are *James*

by R. V. G. Tasker, and *First and Second Thessalonians* by Leon Morris. The entire Tyndale series is being written "to place in the hands of students and serious readers of the New Testament, at a moderate cost, commentaries by a number of scholars who, while they are free to make their own individual contributions, are united in a common desire to promote a truly biblical theology" (p. 5). The commentaries are primarily exegetical and only secondarily homiletic. They are based on the King James Version for a twofold purpose: first, because this version is most familiar and most available to the average reader and second, because working with the King James Version it is easier to show why, on textual and linguistic grounds, the late versions are so often to be preferred.

Dr. Guthrie is Tutor in New Testament Language and Literature in the London Bible College. He is a scholarly, conservative student of the Scriptures and is well qualified for the task to which he sets himself in this volume.

Following a general preface and author's preface, the book deals with the problems of introduction of the three pastoral epistles, I and II Timothy and Titus. It is at this point of considering the problems of introduction that the book is most valuable. Dr. Guthrie's position is conservative and he very ably champions the Pauline authorship of these epistles. Each of the problems of introduction are carefully considered and the critical views of the main advocates of non-apostolic authorship, together with the reasons for them, are carefully set forth. The author then clearly, concisely and graciously establishes his reasons for accepting the conservative position. These reasons are good and far outweigh the negative arguments against Pauline authorship. This discussion by Dr. Guthrie is fair, honest, and scholarly and makes it clear that those who repudiate Paul's authorship involve themselves in far more diffi-

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culties than those who accept his authorship.

The commentary section of the book is excellent. Each of the three epistles is given an outline analysis followed by an exegetical commentary. The style is easily readable and concise though adequate.

An interesting and helpful final section of the book is an appendix, "An Examination of P. N. Harrison's Linguistic Arguments" against Pauline authorship. Dr. Guthrie's conclusion is that "nothing in the linguistic evidence demands the abandonment of Pauline authenticity" (p. 228).

This is a good book, a lucid, sane study of introductory problems and a well written commentary on the pastoral letters.

JOHN M. HAINS

*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, by John Calvin, translated by Henry Beveridge, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1957. Pp. 582 and 704. Paperback edition, \$5.00; Cloth edition, \$7.50.

Of the three English translations of the *Institutes* this one by Henry Beveridge is the last. Following Norton's translation (1561) and Allen's (1813), Beveridge's work was published in Edinburgh by the Calvin Translation Society in 1845 and came to be the best-known translation of the Reformer's most famous writing in Great Britain. Allen's earlier work, republished by the Presbyterian Board of Publication at Philadelphia, has been the version of the *Institutes* most widely circulated in this country. Allen's method of translation was meant to be, he informs us in his Preface, somewhere between "a servile adherence to the letter of the original, the style of which is so very remote from the English idiom," and "a mere attention to the ideas and

sentiments of the original." Allen therefore "aimed at a medium between servility and looseness." He is critical of Norton's earlier work because "the utmost he could give us was English words in a Latin idiom." It is our judgment, however, that Allen alters Calvin's style in translation far beyond what is necessary. Graphic metaphor is removed or altered so as to take the punch out of the writing in scores of places and much of the power of the work disappears.

Beveridge is an improvement here. Learning from Norton the danger of "overstraining after such scrupulosity as [he] aimed at," Beveridge hopes that the true meaning of the author is "made accessible to every class of readers." Beveridge's rather extensive *Introductory Notice*, in which he describes his method, is left out of the present work and a new introduction has been written by Professor John Murray. In his essay "On the Literary History of the *Institutes*," after commendation for the three translations that have appeared in English, Dr. B. B. Warfield closed with the observation that the "'perfect version,' or the version which conveys the sense of delight and satisfaction with which Calvin's Latin affects the reader, is yet to seek." Professor Murray concurs in that judgment, saying that "a more adequate translation of Calvin's *Institutes* into English is a real *desideratum*," and that the seed being sown in republishing this edition of Beveridge's work "may bear fruit some day in such a harvest." Until that appears this work is the best available in English of Calvin's *magnum opus*.

— M. E. OSTERHAVEN

*The Meaning of Baptism*, by John Frederick Jansen, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1958. Pp. 125. \$2.50.

Beyond any shadow of doubt baptism



is one of the sharply debated doctrines in the Christian Church in our time. This is especially true in America where the "Baptist" community exceeds twenty million persons and is vigorous in its protestations to the truth about baptism as it conceives it. Much has been written on both sides of the subject, so that there is an abundance of material. The volume before us is not a formal exposition of the subject but a series of twenty-one meditations in which the meaning of the rite is brought home to the reader. The discussion is arranged under three heads: Bearing His Name; Sharing His Death; and, Life in His Spirit. The chapters bear such titles as, "The Owner's Mark," and, "Whose Name Do You Bear?" The book throughout is fresh but certain chapters were especially stimulating to this reader. "Baptism of Blood," "The Double Sign" (water and blood), and "Dedication is Not Enough" were among them.

The author, a native of the Netherlands, is Professor of Systematic Theology at the Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Austin, Texas. His warm style, enhanced by an appreciation for literary beauty, is much in evidence in this volume.

— M. E. OSTERHAVEN

*The Pilgrim's Regress*, by C. S. Lewis, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1958. Pp. 5-199. \$3.00.

Here is a new reprint of a book which first appeared in 1933. Its author, who holds the Chair of Medieval and Renaissance English Literature at Cambridge, needs no introduction to the Christian public.

As its sub-title indicates, *The Pilgrim's Regress* is a full-scale allegory. Its characters and incidents, though in some respects like those of Bunyan, have a philosophical orientation which lies outside the compass of the Puritan

classic. Its aim is to defend Christianity as over against modern unbelief, and to provide an adequate place for reason and "romanticism" within the Christian philosophy of religion.

Vital to the genius of the book is Dr. Lewis' concept of "romanticism." He is at great pains in his preface to distinguish it from other motifs which have sometimes borne the name. For our author, "romanticism" embodies an experience of intense longing. It may be awakened by the world of nature, or by literature dealing with the marvelous, or by a host of other things. Painfully intense, yet somehow pleasant, it seeks satisfaction in one realm of human experience after another, but finds it in none, thereby pointing to One beyond space and time who has implanted it and who alone can grant it fulfillment.

Lewis' pilgrim, John by name, leaves a Christian environment to take up this romantic quest. Perils beset his way to the north and to the south. Cold systems of thought on the one hand, and steaming jungles of lust on the other, either deny the object of his quest or promise satisfaction which proves unreal. Finally, in "Mother Kirk" he finds his real need met.

*The Pilgrim's Regress* is brilliant and thought-provoking. It cannot wholly escape, at least in some portions, the charge of obscurity, but the running headline at the top of each page does much to relieve this. Those who combine a flair for good literature with a working knowledge of philosophy and a heart sympathy for the Christian faith will find this rich fare indeed.

— WILLIAM BROWNSON, JR.

*A Theology of the Laity*, by Hendrik Kraemer, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1958. Pp. 7-192. \$3.00.

The frequency and urgency with which in our generation the Church is

being called to *be* the Church is an indication of the fact that there is a growing consensus among us that the Church must be recognized in her unique nature and mission, and that to relegate her to the general classification of the organizations of society means to misunderstand her essential nature as Church of Christ, and to turn her into an association of men. Yes, let the Church be the Church! But what does that mean *in concreto*? Some merely reply to that query with a restatement of the historical position of their particular tradition. Others have even sought to appropriate the slogan for their own peculiar and often narrow sectarian interests.

But, fortunately, recent theological literature on the general subject of the Church has produced more than restatement. Careful exegetical studies have yielded new insights. These in turn have been used with great profit in theological expositions. While gratefully acknowledging these contributions, Dr. Kraemer finds something basic lacking in all of them, however, namely a theology of the laity as an indispensable part of a truly Christian ecclesiology.

Kraemer, one of the great lay leaders in the contemporary Church, is not wholly satisfied with the kind of new emphasis that is being placed in the various Christian traditions—Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant—upon the role of the laity with respect to the mission of the Church in an increasingly secularized world. He contends that all the fine-sounding phrases and the best-intentioned programs will in the end remain without a lasting effect unless they issue from a profound recognition of the place and function of the laity, as inherent in the nature and the calling of the Church. In short, Kraemer is of the opinion that the Church for centuries has operated without a genuinely biblical doctrine of the laity, and the book under review is his attempt to provide a perspective and broad out-

line for a theology of the laity.

In a brief historical survey Kraemer argues that what he calls the "hierarchical-ecclesiastical" type of thinking has fundamentally continued to prevail after the Reformation, despite its emphasis on the priesthood of all believers. He calls for a radical approach, since he is convinced that nothing less than a new conception of the Church, in which finally the laity and its ministry will be incorporated as constitutive elements in the total doctrine of the Church, will do. In other words, this book contains a frank appeal to the Church to venture into a reorientation and revision of *all existing ecclesiologies*. Kraemer has no doubt that such a radical reorientation will also have a most wholesome effect on the extended conversations within the ecumenical movement on ecclesiological questions.

This is an exciting thesis! For many years this layman has served the world Church. In his many writings, some of which have never appeared in English, he has constantly and passionately been raising the question: What is the Church and what is her mission? In a profound simplicity he has been propounding the answer which he heard in the biblical witness: the one Church in Christ *is* mission, *is* ministry in its total life and witness, through the ministry of the laity and through the ministry of the clergy, as the Holy Spirit equips and uses each for service in Christ's kingdom.

This work is supremely worthy of the Church's most careful and prayerful consideration. Those servants of the Church whom Kraemer occasionally calls the "professional theologians," and whom at times he finds a bit hard to understand, will undoubtedly raise some questions. That is their job! They might well inquire more critically into the question of the relationship between the ministry of the laity and the ministry of "the offices." They might ask whether the institutional elements in the Church

should in all instances be contrasted, as a historically understandable and perhaps necessary development, with the basic charismatic nature of the Church, or whether perhaps the institutional elements must be seen in the framework of the charismatic, as also being creations of the Spirit. We could mention other points for critical discussion. Fer- vently it is to be hoped, however, that the churches will not evade the urgent call to self-examination contained in this book by sitting back and waiting until their "experts" have "solved" all the issues.

ISAAC C. ROTTENBERG

*The Unity and Disunity of the Church*, by G. W. Bromiley, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1958. Pp. 5-104. \$1.50.

The material, as presented in this booklet (another addition to the growing catalogue of "Pathway Books"), seems to fall quite naturally into three major parts.

In the first section (chapters 1-4) the author introduces the problem, so familiar and yet ever perplexing, of the "sense of unity" which is inherent in every genuinely Christian confession on the one hand, and on the other hand the "challenge of disunity" in the historical existence of the Church, which seems to belie this Christian confession. Although stating with some emphasis that unity is not the same as uniformity, and that consequently diversity does not *per se* imply disunity, the author nevertheless shows, and in the opinion of this reviewer quite correctly, that the fundamental dilemma in the question of the unity and the disunity of the Church is how one can reconcile the reality of sin in historical existence with the reality of salvation in Christ.

Two approaches, which are denoted as "organizational unity" and "invisible unity," are analyzed in the various forms

in which they manifest themselves, and are then rejected by the author as inadequate solutions to the problem. In both instances the alleged fallacies are attributed to a basic misunderstanding concerning the relationship of the question of church unity to Jesus Christ himself.

In the second major section (chapters 5-7) the author develops along the lines of a trinitarian theology what he considers to be the biblical foundations for a doctrine of the unity of the Church. These chapters, especially, contain some very valuable insights on the basis and meaning of our unity in Christ, which is seen as an accomplished fact and present redemptive reality by virtue of the substitutionary work of Christ. Jesus Christ, who is our justification and our sanctification is also shown to be our oneness. He is, according to Dr. Bromiley, not merely the focus of our unity, but also its substance.

The final section (chapters 8-12) deals with what the author refers to as "the forms or subsidiary foci of unity." Here the author enters into a discussion of some very practical questions, such as our attitude to the Bible, the confessions, the sacraments and the ministry. I find a refreshing broadness and openness in the treatment of these issues by this scholar, who recently has joined the faculty of the Fuller Theological Seminary. Writings of this type and quality offer wonderful opportunities for conversations of a truly ecumenical nature between those who belong to different ecclesiastical traditions as well as those who adhere to divergent theological positions.

I call special attention to the chapter on "Unity and Confession." The author's emphasis that the function of the confession is not primarily to serve as the ground of unity, nor as an "instrument for the testing of orthodoxy," but as a response of faith to Jesus Christ, is wholesome and still much needed in our day. One quote I would like to insert as

a conclusion: "... opportunity must be given for the free and patient and continuing discussion, orally and in writing, of all disputed issues, without rancor or scorn or self-will or threats or repression, but with a common desire to learn and teach in the school of Christ" (pp. 80-81). Our best preparation for inter-denominational conversation of this kind is intra-denominational discussion in this spirit!

ISAAC C. ROTTENBERG

*I Believe In Immortality*, by John Sutherland Bonnell, New York: Abingdon Press, 1959. Pp. 96. \$1.25.

The title is just right for the apparent purpose and for the contents of the book. The man on the street may not disbelieve in immortality. He hasn't enough conviction to be an unbeliever. His uncertainties, however, need to be removed. Things unseen and eternal can become valuable in his eyes only if he can see himself as continuing unendingly in some state of being. The limited object of the argument, immortality rather than resurrection, and the almost exclusive use of extra-biblical evidence and reasoning, may make this book exactly what Mr. Average Man needs as a help in the first step toward the full Christian faith.

The volume should prove helpful to the busy preacher as a source book for literary and historical references to both belief and disbelief in immortality.

There are six short chapters, and these are further subdivided into sections of a page or two in length. The subdivisions do not always advance the argument. Often they approach the subject on much the same level but from a different point of view.

The first chapter is entitled "Immortality" and gives three reasons for faith in the reality of immortality: the universality of the belief, the nature of

man, and the conviction that the universe unfolds a purpose and a reason.

In the chapter on "The Certitude of Eternal Life" Bonnell contrasts the attitude of the agnostics with the nature of eternal life which is more and other than the mere continuation of the present unsatisfactory existence.

In "Skepticism and Faith" he treats at length the cynicism of our times and its possible causes and sad results. The short treatment of faith places it in glorious contrast with the hopelessness of unbelief.

Under the subject of "Body and Soul" the author not only shows that the old idea of the utter dependence of the soul on the body is inadequate, but through his treatment of the influence of soul on body opens the door to a discussion of the joyous activity of heaven.

The chapter on "The Power of the Resurrection" lists eight traditional arguments for belief in the resurrection of our Lord. These are well known to the informed Christian but may be helpful for religious illiterates. Bonnell does not treat the subject of our resurrection. This we consider a real weakness. This remark applies as well to the last chapter, "A Personal Confession of Faith." Yet the faith itself is transparently triumphant and should make any skeptical reader of the book feel poverty-stricken by contrast.

We believe the volume would have been more valuable if larger use had been made of contemporary thought, persons, and sources. It limits itself almost entirely to an age that is gone.

RAYMOND R. VAN HEUKELOM

*The Church Redemptive*, by Howard Grimes, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1958. Pp. 191. \$3.50.

This fine book deals with the nature and mission of the Church. The author, Dr. Howard Grimes, professor of Christian education, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, has

group life, outreach, providing leadership, and administration. There are many fine observations made in these chapters which I have no space to mention.

The usefulness of this book is further enhanced by a list of additional readings, an index of Scripture references, and an index of subjects. This is an excellent book.

J. ROBERT STEEGSTRA

*Basic Christianity*, by John R. W. Stott, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1958. Pp. 7-144. \$1.25.

Here is an excellent summary statement of the Christian faith. A publication of the Inter-Varsity Fellowship, this little volume is designed to present convincing evidence of the reasonableness of the Christian faith to any honest, but uncertain inquirer.

The material of this book is grouped under four main heads, Christ's Person, Man's Need, Christ's Work, and Man's Response. The claims, character and resurrection of Christ are all presented in the three chapters of the first section. The fact, nature, and consequences of sin form the subject of Man's Need. Christ's Work is shown under the subjects of his death, Spirit, and church. In explaining Man's Response the author writes of counting the cost, making a decision, and being a Christian.

The author introduces his subject with an opening chapter on "The Right Approach." Here he suggests that God has spoken and God has acted; therefore man is to respond. This response in turn requires something of a man; for he must seek diligently, humbly, honestly, and obediently. A suggested prayer for the seeker to use is offered at the end of this chapter.

Here is an excellent book for many purposes. Perhaps the best is that for which it was written, to present to any honest student the facts of the Christian faith in a clear and convincing way.

some keen convictions as to what the Church is and what her responsibility in the world is. He constantly emphasizes that our understanding of the mission of the Church is founded upon our concept of the nature of the Church.

After the introduction, the first four chapters describe the nature of the Church as "The Body of Christ," "The People of God," "The Fellowship of the Spirit," and "The Call of God." The Church is seen as both an organism and a covenant community. We cannot of ourselves make the Church. It is God's work, his gift. Yet we must act responsibly. We must respond in such a manner as to become a medium through whom God works.

The Church is a community of believers, all called to serve God. Laity and clergy are one in their responsibility as the people of God. We do not simply "use" laymen in the work of the Church. They are the Church, responsible each and all in the work of God. The fellowship of the Church will excel that of the Rotary Club when it is a redemptive fellowship, a Fellowship of the Spirit, manifesting the mind of Christ.

In discussing the meaning of Christian vocation Dr. Grimes asserts: "The Church must present to men the call of God in Christ and that individuals must respond to that call in terms of the totality of their existence. Men must take so seriously their Christian vocation that the dichotomy between worship and work, sacred and secular, Sunday and weekday, is broken down. The only effective means through which the Christian witness can be made today is the laity, that is, all the people of God. All, including clergymen, must witness to their faith in their daily work, in their social life, in politics, and in every other area of life" (p. 60).

In the second section of the book, under the heading, "The Mission of the Laity," the author applies his concept of the Church to the various aspects of her life—worship, Christian nurture,

Any pastor or church leader could well have this book on hand, ready to give to just such an inquirer. The book can also be used very profitably by Christians themselves for their own study. For the main items of the Christian faith and life are covered in short, but adequate compass. It could well be used as a text book for a study group, a young people's class, a prayer group, etc.

The book is offered to the public in a small, inexpensive form that adds to its attractiveness. Its pocket size and paper cover, while not the thing for fine library volumes, have real advantages. Pastors could afford to give an occasional copy to interested people, or churches could easily have a supply on hand for similar use.

This reviewer recommends this little book highly as an excellent statement of the Christian faith. It is sound and evangelical, a trustworthy book on the most important subject in human life. Be sure to get it!

DANIEL H. FYLSTRA

*Existence Under God*, by Albert Edward Day, New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1958. Pp. 13-144. \$2.50.

*Existence Under God* is the summary of Dr. Day's personal research into human life. The book is divided into three sections: The Discovery; The Dialogue; The Deliverance.

In the first section the author writes about the unfailing presence of God. The presence of God can be realized by his people. "The scientist in his laboratory, the logician in his study, the lover in his tryst, the plowman in the field, the politician on the hustings, the philosopher and the plodder, the sinner and the saint, the frivolous socialite and the social reformer, the thief and the officer of the law, are in the presence of God" (page 15). He points out that one of the tragedies of life is that we fail to recognize the presence of God because he

comes to us in the garb of common life.

In the second section Dr. Day indicates how God can communicate with men and vice versa. Frequently we refuse to hear what he has to say. We change the subject when he comes too close to our pet prejudices, our favorite whims, our moral misadventures. At other times we chatter so furiously, even under the guise of earnest prayer, that he cannot get an idea in edgewise.

In the final section on The Deliverance the writer demonstrates that communion with God can be realized. The experience of God is not an illusion. God is available. Abundant illustrations are drawn from the saints and mystics of the ages—the Apostle Paul, Bernard of Clairvaux, Kierkegaard and others.

—HENRY A. MOUW

*Faith of Our Fathers*, by Walter J. Kukkonen, New York: The American Press, 1958. Pp. 203. \$3.00.

What makes a good study guide or catechism? (The world, like Athens and its idols, is full of them!) Aside from being biblically true, a good catechism study guide will be simple. Dr. Kukkonen develops this simple thematic statement: "God, the Creator of Heaven and Earth has created me. Through Jesus Christ, His only Son, He has redeemed me, a poor, miserable sinner, and Calls and Preserves me that I might be his own and live under Him as his Dear Child to Serve Him in Righteousness." This statement of faith embraces the 109 points of the *Explanation to Luther's Small Catechism* adopted by the Church of Finland in 1948, and is the doctrinal badge of Evangelical Finnish Lutheranism, much as question and answer No. 1 of The Heidelberg Catechism gives the essence of all that follows.

Clarity is an evident quality in this book. The simple theme is developed in

short sentences, crisp almost to dogmatic, but perfectly in line with the proposition of his first chapter: "God Speaks and I Listen." Dr. Kukkonen makes the biblical essentials of faith clear and his work is conspicuously free from contentions.

The Gospel is always contemporary, and in that sense largely, the work is up-to-date. A good catechism is not a story-book; but neither is it just a proof-text manual of biblical propositions. The brevity of the chapters, paragraphs and sentences with their straightforward ideas carry a cargo of conviction in a most usable form.

Readers of Reformed persuasion will have to abandon the title *Faith of Our Fathers* at a few points, such as the Confessional, the Sacraments, Baptismal Regeneration, The Image of God in Man, and The Ubiquity of Christ. But we should expect this divergence and enjoy the variety.

Readers will be glad that our Finnish Christian Brethren have so able a theologian as Dr. Kukkonen, and such an excellent instrument for the instruction of her people in the *Faith of Our Fathers*.

It is amusing to see the sometimes vast difference between the "ads" on inner front-back cover flaps and the book they embrace. Another thing, theologians exhibit an *esprit de corps* in mutually congratulating theological works within their own denomination. Both the flaps and the theologians are exceptions here, for it is true that it is "a good book for any Christian's library," and it is "an excellent summary of the Christian faith . . . and a stimulating guide for the deeper penetration into the Scriptures." Its emphasis is Lutheran; its spirit and truth are universal.

LEONARD WEZEMAN

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*Baptists: Your Church and Your Life*, by Gale E. Dobbins, New

York: The American Press, 1958.  
Pp. 60. \$2.50.

There will always be a ready market for concise denominational histories which are written for the lay public, and many excellent books of this type are available. The Rev. Gale Dobbins, a minister in the American Baptist Convention, has combined a short discussion of the history, polity, and beliefs of his church to form a guide for Baptist laymen. Unhappily there are enough questionable statements in the historical section to cast some doubt on the trustworthiness of the rest. We are informed at the outset that "the first church was a Baptist church," which is understandable. But this is "proved" by the fact that the church was composed of followers of the "first Baptist preacher, namely John the Baptist." Then follows a number of supporting quotations by various authorities such as the 18th century historian Mosheim (who is misspelled Masheim). Mosheim's quotation, we discover, is completely out of context. Then we are informed that while Christ founded the Baptist church, all other denominations were founded by men, and a convenient table is appended to illustrate this. The Catholic church, for instance, is said to have been founded by Gregory in 590. Presumably the members of this church prior to this time were all Baptists! Later the Baptists are identified with such odd company as the Paulicians, Montanists (misspelled Montainists), Novatians, and Albigenses. Such loose use of terminology and such sweeping generalizations do scant service to a great Christian tradition. Any uninformed layman who reads this account is apt to get a completely distorted idea of the whole Christian community. Finally, it seems quite out of line to charge \$2.50 for such a slim and unimpressive volume.

— WALLACE N. JAMISON



*A History of Baptists in America Prior to 1845*, by Jesse L. Boyd, New York: The American Press, 1957. Pp. 205. \$3.00.

Out of a lifelong interest in the history of his own church, Jesse L. Boyd has given us a brief history of Baptist beginnings in America up to 1845. While there is no question regarding his partiality to his particular communion, the author is sufficiently aware of the broader perspectives of his story to detail many of the weaknesses as well as the strong points of the earliest American Baptists. The style is characterized by simplicity and refreshing touches of humor. There are abundant illustrations of early Baptist worthies, and at the end of the book several appendices give lists of the earliest Baptist associations, schools, publications and missionaries with statistical tables of interest to the specialist. Notes appended at the end of each chapter show that most of the information in the book is derived from secondary sources, but they are the standard sources such as Benedict, Backus, Armitage, Vedder and Sweet. In addition Mr. Boyd cites from the minutes of five early Baptist conventions.

Up until the American Revolution the Baptists were a small, bitterly persecuted sect scattered thinly throughout the colonies. They were chiefly notable for their rugged independence of spirit and their capacity for getting into trouble. Like Roger Williams, who was constitutionally incapable of agreeing with anyone for very long, not even with his fellow Baptists, the average member of this communion was apt to be contentious and separatist to the extreme. Not until the origin of the Philadelphia Baptist Convention in 1707 was there any significant movement toward bringing the scattered congregations into closer relations with one another. The Revolutionary War

did much to strengthen the Baptist cause. While the established churches suffered because of their dependence on Britain, or their highly organized polity, the Baptists forged ahead both in numbers and in the geographical area to which they ministered.

In his book Mr. Boyd gives passing notice to the fact that Baptists led the fight to secure approval for the first amendment to the Constitution, an achievement in which their descendants may be justifiably proud. Also, the missionary activity of the Baptists, beginning with the surprising conversion of the pioneer missionary Adoniram Judson and his wife to the Baptist position, is sketched in broad outline. At home the Baptist church became involved in many worthwhile activities such as temperance, home missions, church extension, Bible societies, and higher education. Because a large majority of the Baptist churches lay south of the Mason-Dixon line, the issue of slavery was becoming increasingly acute at the time this history ends, and in keeping with Baptist independence there was little unanimity regarding the subject. Partly due to these tensions and partly due to the inherent individualism of the church, Baptists were plagued by schisms and internal strife. Typical was the strange anti-missionary movement known as "Two-seedism" which spread through the south.

The treatment by the author is both balanced and judicious. Not only Baptists but all churchmen interested in denominational histories will find this volume useful.

—WALLACE N. JAMISON

*A Handbook for the Preacher at Work*, by Jeff D. Brown, Grand Rapids: Baker Book Store, 1958. Pp. 11-90. \$1.75.

This book is another in Baker Book Store's "Minister's Handbook Series." It was written "to help the minister solve



many of the problems which arise in his work, and also to give the layman an insight into the life of his pastor between Sunday sermons." The book covers a wide variety of subjects. Some chapter titles are "Why Some Pastors are Failures," "Why Some Pastors Succeed," "The Pastor in his Study," "Visitation Work," "Educating the Members to Pray."

The book can be helpful to young men about to enter the seminary or soon to enter the ministry, giving them a preview of their field of labor. The author in writing of twenty great subjects in less than eighty pages can say very little to be really helpful. What he says is good; what is left unsaid is very disappointing. He states no problems, so you find no answers. He gives no illustrations or examples or real advice, only general information. A few years of experience in the ministry gives you more than this book.

The second purpose is to give the layman an insight into the pastor's life. Should a layman purchase the book, even though the book title does not speak to layman, or should the preacher give this book to laymen to read, the purpose might be accomplished. The book, however, is written for ministers and not for laymen.

In my estimation the price of the book is too high for its content and the pages too sketchy to be of value.

HENRY VAN RAALTE

*The Great Texts of the Bible, Volume VIII, St. Matthew*, edited by James Hastings, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1958, Pp. vi-451. \$4.00.

A review of a work that has been widely used since its appearance in 1914 when it was published by Charles Scribner's Sons, Edinburgh, seems hardly necessary. The new reprint has not changed content or format at all. It

comes in the same twenty volumes, seven for the Old Testament, and thirteen for the New, with identical pages, except for necessary changes in the title page at the beginning and the omission of the advertising pages at the end. An Index Volume is available for \$1.50. The complete set can be purchased for \$75.00. In 1914 one paid three pre-devaluation American dollars per volume.

The quality of the paper employed is somewhat better in the reprint than in the original publication, and the volumes are in consequence about a half inch thinner.

The content is, of course, old. Since Hastings compiled from published sources the material was not new in 1914, but it may now be old enough to be new to a generation of preachers which has tried very hard to be contemporary and relevant. A set of this kind calls one to the eternal verities and directs attention to the great texts which must remain our best stock in trade to the end of time.

Each exposition is preceded with references to English literature on the text. Here one confronts the great names of England's preachers in an earlier time. This feature may be very helpful to one who has not indexed his own library, or has access to and makes use of a library by mail. The usefulness of the reprint would have been greatly increased if the lists of available literature had been expanded to include references to published works since 1914.

We did not purchase *The Great Texts* until after long hard years of pulpit ministry, because we had been warned of the danger of using such works as "crutches." If one will turn to the work only after he has "formed" his own sermon he will be in no danger, and he may find gems of thought, expression, or illustration frequently enough to warrant purchase of the entire set.

—RAYMOND R. VAN HEUKELOM

*Power in Preaching*, by W. E. Sangster, New York: Abingdon Press, 1958. Pp. 13-110. \$2.25.

This small book is written by Dr. Sangster, who is said to be one of the great preachers of our time. He served as minister of Westminster Central Hall in London and is now general secretary of the Home Mission Department of the Methodist Church in Great Britain. The book is brief but points up very succinctly some of the important facts in truly, powerful preaching. Many preachers have not read a book on homiletics since seminary days. This is a good refresher course for the busy pastor, in brief compass.

Dr. Sangster suggests, in the first chapter, that to be a powerful preacher one must firmly believe in the power of preaching. Too much preaching and too many preachers have lost the authoritative note. Chapter Two discusses centralities. It is truly said that too many sermons have been an endless string of illustrations without real, serious content. Today the effort is "made to exalt worship by belittling the sermon" (p. 39). Chapter Three emphasizes the need of good hard work in sermon preparation. Too many seek inspiration without perspiration. Chapter Four is entitled, "Make it Plain." Jesus' popularity lay in the fact that the common people heard him gladly. Let the present day preacher give heed. Then, make it practical: it must be applicable to life. Otherwise, why preach? The sixth chapter speaks of the heavenly glow—not imaginary or imitation, but real. The final chapter suggests the vital place of prayer.

This book is far from exhaustive. Yet for the small price it is a valuable reminder of the great task of preaching. The format of the book is good. There is an index of names.

—JEROME DE JONG

*Prophetic Preaching, A New Approach*, by Otto J. Baab, New York: Abingdon Press, 1958. Pp. 7-159. \$2.50.

The purpose of this little book by the late professor of Old Testament interpretation at Garrett Biblical Institute is to show the true meaning of prophetic preaching. In this purpose the author is reasonably successful. While written in an easy style, the book does deal with profound themes. The author's personal attitude is that the Bible is the unique and unrepeatable record of God's purpose and will to establish on earth and in heaven a society of redeemed men and women. He also believes that in the study of the preaching of the Hebrew prophets the modern preacher will sense a spiritual kinship with biblical times.

The material of this study is presented in seven chapters, alliteratively titled the Prophetic Preacher's Passion, Problem, Purpose, Power, Perspective, Proclamation, and Promise. Each chapter is taken up chiefly with the exposition of the Old Testament prophets' experiences, but the relationship of these themes to the modern day preacher is also noted.

The prophet's passion has its origin in his initial call and involves three elements, the activity of God who calls, the prophet's own life and character, and the fact of his community. His problem arises from his loyalty to God and his concern for the people. The modern preacher too must proclaim a message of both condemnation and consolation. The prophet's purpose is to be God's spokesman, whatever the circumstances or consequences. A watchman sensing the dangers and evils of his day, he is to point the way to repentance.

The prophet's power is found in his relation to God, who is a God of power. The preacher of power is a man of

faith. His perspective is his theology, what he believes about God, man, the church, and salvation. His proclamation involves the problem of national survival, social injustice, sensuality, and the popularity of religion. Personal surrender to God is the essence of his proclamation.

The last chapter, "The Promise of Prophetic Preaching," while the shortest of the seven, alone makes the book worth its price. The promise refers, not to the possibilities or rewards of such preaching, but to the note of confident hope this preaching always sounds. "In the faith of the prophet God the Creator-Redeemer is both Judge and Savior. Only as Judge can he save, and only as Savior can he judge. . . . The prophet who preaches today must remember that the redemption which God's love desires for us men requires the judgment which our sin demands" (p. 142). The prophetic promise is the complete Word of God, which is full of hope. And finally, to preach prophetically we must preach Christ.

This is not a book of sermons or sermon outlines. It is rather a guide for those willing to work to find the source of power and effectiveness in the pulpit. It is well worth reading.

—DANIEL H. FYLSTRA

*The Christian Teacher*, by Perry D. LeFevre, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1958. Pp. 176. \$2.75.

Dr. LeFevre is associate professor of theology and education in the Federated Theological Faculty of the University of Chicago and is a senior associate in the Danforth Foundation. The book grew out of a series of lectures given under Danforth auspices in which Dr. LeFevre tried to establish a closer relationship between theology and higher education. The problem is dominated by a growing concern for the communication of Christian commitment in ways

other than by a creedal affirmation. In the appendix of selected readings one is given an excellent bibliography to show the extensive literature that has grown out of this current revival of interest in the relation of religion to higher education and in the re-evaluation of the aims of higher education as such.

The chapter headings give an idea of the scope of the small book and will remind the specialists that there is something here for each of their disciplines. Often college teachers are so smug in their specific areas of mastery that they look with disdain on the unlearned generalist in his attempts to storm their little castles. Here is a teacher and theologian who dares enter upon disciplines other than his own to lay down some significant premises that no specialist can ignore. The Christian teacher in his calling; the teacher in the humanities, in the social sciences, in the natural sciences; and the teacher in his relation to the student as teacher, counselor, member of the college community and as interpreter of God, each have a chapter of challenging analysis.

In all the lectures Dr. LeFevre takes the position that the Christian teacher needs a broader understanding of his task than is commonly found in teachers who call themselves Christian. This fusion into one complete whole of teacher, subject matter, learner, method and truth of God is a rare achievement. Invariably, the second-rate teacher will try for one or the other of these facets of his job, but only the one of rare gifts will be able to do them all. And yet if any one of the whole is missing, it may destroy the effectiveness of the others, however hard the teacher may try to make his Christian witness count. The Christian teacher must be grounded in a philosophy, a psychology, a methodology and a theology.

There is not much room for the dogmatist among the author's Christian teachers. The author looks upon the excursions into new discovery within every

major discipline to be continuously challenging and upsetting to the teacher. In his attempt to keep abreast of new science and new method, he does lean strongly toward the "group dynamics" of learning and the independent "realization of personality." Authoritarian teaching is a contradiction of Christian purpose and directive counseling is likely to be ignorant of the "existence situation."

What one misses most in this challenging book is an appreciation of the relevance of biblical truth to the problem. The analysis is primarily two-dimensional, man's understanding of self and man's understanding of the predicament of his fellow men. The Christian teacher must supply the needs of a new objective in self and of a tragic society. The study becomes then primarily a study in psychology and in sociology, and the "ultimate concern" of man for God's approval becomes a vague rethinking of one's faith. The rooting of such ideals in sound understanding of Scripture might give the author a bit more of the confidence of an Isaiah or an Amos. It might even become possible for his Christian teacher to speak on some matters "as one having authority."

—CLARENCE DE GRAAF

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*Taking Heed To The Flock*, by Peter DeJong, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958, Pp. 85. \$1.00.

Here is an inexpensive paper-back which should be in the hands of every elder.

The author declares his purpose to be to revitalize family visitation, which is declining in practice and in danger of dying away. He cherishes the hope that his book will aid in retaining family visitation in principle, improving it in practice, retrieving it from being an unpleasant ordeal, and restoring it as the proper work of the elder. I be-

lieve this book will go a long way in accomplishing its purpose.

Dr. DeJong presents excellent chapters on every facet of family visitation: history, scriptural basis, purpose, necessity, proper practice, and objections.

He traces the family visitation practice back to Scripture itself. Then he proceeds to show how the practice was carried out in the early church, maintained faithfully by the Reformed family of churches, but now enters years of decline unless the churches accept the challenge once again to see its importance.

It is difficult to refute his arguments about necessity. It is the best way to maintain a close contact between the officers of the church and those who are under their care, at the same time doing no harm to the concept of the priesthood of believers. There is no better way to know the spiritual condition of the people and the effectiveness of the work of the church. But it must be done regularly, officially, and with definite purpose.

The author also bluntly deals with the dangers of the program. It is not to be a social visit; the elders are not policemen who engage in an inquisition; it must not root itself in a legalistic concept of spiritual life; and elders are not to arrogate to themselves the right to judge the heart.

Here is a clear, well-written book on an important subject. Few authors have concerned themselves with it. It strikes at a weak spot in the church. I heartily recommend it and hope that it may create a new concern for family visitation.

— HARLAND STEELE

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*The Protestant and Politics*, by William Lee Miller, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1958. Pp. 9-92. \$1.00.

Are Christian love and political action irreconcilable? For many people the

answer is: in theory "no," in practice "yes." Mr. Miller is not a "yes man," and, as you read, the thought comes up like thunder that it's a suspect and shabby love that detains the Christ in stained glass windows and turns the world over to "burly sinners." And that old cliché, "Politics and Religion don't mix," is so honestly and devastatingly exposed that you find yourself not quite so sure about it after all. Mr. Miller develops the theme that "Politics and Religion *do* mix"—sometimes for good and often for bad—but, they *do* mix! What is more, politics is inescapable. "Religion is going to be mixed in Politics one way or the other, whether we like it or not. The only choice we really have is, 'what kind of a mixture will it be?'" (p. 25)

Chapters 3 and 4, "The Trouble Religion Can Cause in Politics" and "Christianity's Contribution to Politics," are the touch points for the other chapters of a little volume with massive ideas that make the love of Christ a reality. Mr. Miller would never (I sense) try to spell out the details of a Christian in political action, because "Christianity gives no precise answer to any of the dilemmas of life—certainly not the political ones. But it provides what is more important: direction, understanding, commitment." Religion can do harm in politics. It "may appear as theological knowledge which instead of deepening political thinking, becomes a substitute for it; it may be a devotional interest that instead of undergirding action in the world, discourages it; it may be a commitment to the organized church that, instead of raising the political level, lowers it" (p. 31). These and the other chapters of *The Protestant and Politics* are contagious discussions that will develop a rash of disturbing questions in the thoughtful reader. That is one of its calculated purposes, well done.

This book is one in a series belong-

ing to The Layman's Theological Library whose editor, Robert McAfee Brown, says it intends to give "a fresh exploration of the Christian faith and what it can mean in the life of the twentieth-century man." It does. A book of this nature—frank, courageous and brilliant—will meet with closed minds and "ivory tower" theologies which will reject it. But I venture to believe that many a college Bible professor will use *The Protestant and Politics* for required reading. Its exposé of our inertia and prejudice in the political investment of ourselves, its aid in creating strong and affirmative feelings of genuine love toward the society of "burly sinners," gives a little volume a mighty voice.

—LEONARD WEZEMAN

*The Dynamics of Christian Education*, by Iris V. Cully, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1958. Pp. 205. \$3.75.

The dynamics of Christian education are centered in the *kerygma* and the *didache* of the Word of God, says the author. These two terms appear constantly in the text and seem to be objects of fascination. In the unstable and changing field of theory regarding Christian education we need the clear penetrating insights of this book. Dr. Cully places the emphasis where it belongs in Christian education. To be worthy of the name, Christian education, it must be centered squarely upon the revelatory content of the Word of God.

The author makes a clear distinction between secular or cultural education and Christian education. Cultural education has many shifting and variable values. Even democracy may become a religion in secular education. Christian education, on the other hand, takes place in a cultural context but is pointing up the absolute values of life. The norm of Christian education is God, revealed in Jesus Christ and his redeeming love. The author does a good job in

making the distinction clear between what is cultural and what is Christian education.

The author is sometimes unclear as to theological foundations. She quotes from John Calvin in defense of infant baptism but seems to think that "It arose as a practical necessity in the second generation of the church when Christian parents wanted their children to participate in the regenerative life of the church at an early age" (p. 99). The author touches a number of subjects which sometimes seem extraneous and unnecessary. The philosophical point of view is the so-called "Christian existentialism."

It is refreshing to find a note of warning against the extreme experience-centered approach. The author is insistent that the content of Christian education be biblical. It is not necessary so to modernize a biblical story as to lose its relevance. She also points out that it is not necessary to understand all the details of shepherd life in order to comprehend what God was doing in and through Joseph. It is the relevance of the revelation in the ancient context that must be made meaningful to our modern world.

There is a last chapter which has a number of suggestions concerning the future curriculum. The author points out that we must be careful with a curriculum which teaches children to find God in nature. The revelation of God in nature can only be understood aright when we know the God who revealed himself in the Word. She also warns against using the illustration of budding tulips to teach the doctrine of the resurrection. This is sheer nonsense because the resurrection of Jesus Christ was a unique event and redemption is its keynote. All in all this is an excellent book to be read by all those interested in this important area of Kingdom growth. One need not agree with all the pre-suppositions but the reading of it will

be repaid by stimulation and insights for better Christian education.

JOHN R. STAAT

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*Channels of Thy Peace*, by Erma W. Kelley, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1958. Pp. 9-111. \$2.00.

This devotional book explores one of the prayers of Francis of Assisi, which begins with "Lord, make me a channel of thy peace." The writer has arranged the devotions into a thirteen-week cycle, with seven daily meditations on each phrase of the prayer. The value of the book is for the Quiet Hour as the reader delves into the meaning of hatred and love, of wrong and forgiveness, of doubt and faith.

The heart of Francis of Assisi throbs in every petition of the prayer:

Lord, make me a channel of thy peace.  
That where there is hatred—I may bring love;

That where there is wrong—I may bring forgiveness;

That where there is discord—I may bring harmony;

That where there is error—I may bring truth;

That where there is doubt—I may bring faith;

That where there is despair—I may bring hope;

That where there are shadows—I may bring thy light;

That where there is sadness—I may bring joy.

Lord, grant that I may seek rather to comfort—than to be comforted;

To understand—than to be understood;

To love—than to be loved;

For

It is by giving—that one receives;

It is by self-forgetting—that one finds;

It is by forgiving—that one is forgiven;

It is by dying—that one awakens to eternal life.

—HENRY A. MOUW

## WRITERS IN THIS ISSUE

### ARTICLES

- Eugene Heideman is minister of the First Reformed Church, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.
- William L. Hiemstra, is Hospital Pastor at Pine Rest Hospital, Grand Rapids, Michigan, and lecturer in pastoral psychology at the seminary.
- Donald J. Bruggink is minister of the Fordham Manor Reformed Church, New York City.
- Isaac C. Rottenberg is minister of the First Reformed Church, New Shrewsbury, N. J., and lecturer in theology at New Brunswick Seminary.
- M. Eugene Osterhaven is Professor of Systematic Theology at the seminary.
- Garret Wilterdink is minister of the Ivanhoe Reformed Church, Chicago, Ill.

### BOOK REVIEWS

- Sylvio J. Scorza is on the faculty of the Northwestern College and Academy, Orange City, Iowa.
- John M. Hains is minister of the Beverly Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Mich.
- William Brownson, Jr. is pastor-elect of the First Reformed Church of Roseland, Chicago, Ill.
- Raymond R. Van Heukelom is minister of the First Reformed Church, Holland, Michigan.
- J. Robert Steegstra is minister of the Covenant Reformed Church, Muskegon, Heights, Michigan.
- Daniel H. Fylstra is minister of the Bethel Reformed Church, Bellflower, California.
- Henry A. Mouw is minister of the Sixth Reformed Church, Holland, Michigan.
- Leonard Wezeman is minister of the Reformed Church at Oak Harbor, Washington.
- Wallace N. Jamison is Professor of Church History at the New Brunswick Theological Seminary, New Brunswick, N. J.
- Henry Van Raalte is minister of the Central Park Reformed Church, Holland, Michigan.
- Clarence De Graaf is Professor of English at Hope College, Holland, Michigan.
- Harland Steele is minister of the Trinity Reformed Church, Holland, Michigan.
- John R. Staat is minister of the Trinity Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan.





